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S. CURTIS,
BINDER.

THE TWINS;

OR,

HOME SCENES.

BY ELIZABETH MILNER.

PUBLISHED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF
THE COMMITTEE OF GENERAL LITERATURE AND EDUCATION,
APPOINTED BY THE SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR THE
SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE;
SOLD AT THE DEPOSITORY,
GREAT QUEEN STREET, LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS;
4, ROYAL EXCHANGE; 16, HANOVER STREET, HANOVER SQUARE;
AND BY ALL BOOKSELLERS.
1855.

CHAPTER I.

Young people, whether girls or boys, like to hear of other young people; especially of those who are of the same age as themselves, and whose employments and pursuits resemble their own.

My young readers would have liked to peep with me into a cottage situated in a village in the north of England. Outside they would have thought it pretty—*very* pretty; and one little room in it they would have particularly liked.

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My first visit to Rose Cottage was under favourable circumstances, for I saw it in the middle of summer, and on one of the sweetest evenings of that delicious time of year. The last rays of the setting sun streamed through a small latticed window, and lit up every object in the room. It had been a day of excessive heat, although the month of June was not far advanced; and already might be seen and felt the heavy dew which was refreshing each herb, fruit, and flower.

Alone in the room, and near to the open window, stood Mary and Elizabeth — familiarly termed Lily—Fortescue, looking out upon the garden and the prospect beyond. They were twin sisters, and had scarcely numbered eight summers. They had been playing in that room and in the garden during the greater part of the day; and now, upon a little couch in one corner, lay, carefully wrapped up, two dolls, as if put to bed betimes by their weary baby-mothers. Battledores, shuttlecocks, soft balls, and other toys, lay scattered in all directions. Presently the children seated themselves opposite each other, upon the window-seat. They were simply dressed in plain white muslin frocks, and each wore a white pinafore. Very strongly they resembled each other. Both had large brown eyes, and a profusion of light brown hair; but their hair was not curled; it was simply parted. Without being particularly pretty children, there was something very pleasing in their perfect simplicity, and childlike look and manner.

"Do you know, Mary," said Lily, after they had sate in silence for some moments, "I am so tired of my doll; I want something new. It is

too hot to play at battledore; besides, I have a plan about something."

"What is it?" said Mary.

"Well, I will tell you. Don't you think if we could make a house of slates, it would be very nice and useful to put things into? The dolls might stay there, you know, and the balls, and everything."

"But how could we get the slates, or make them stick together?"

"Easily," said Lily, "easily. There are plenty of slates by the wall at the bottom of the garden; and you know we must make clay as little Willie Browne did. I'll manage it; I'll show you how to do it! I planned it all this morning. I am tired of our playthings," repeated the little girl, casting an impatient and dissatisfied glance round the room.

Mary said no more; but her face wore a somewhat doubtful expression; and she seemed to be pondering the matter; having, perhaps, an undefined vision of frocks and pinafores being under the nurse's inspection, streaked with clay. Both were silent for a few minutes after the disclosure of this important project; and the song of birds, the chirruping of insects, and the soft rustling of the thick foliage, were the only sounds heard. The casement was half hidden by climbing plants; and a sweet scent of roses and jasmine filled the air. Presently Mary spoke.

"Lily, if mamma were only come home, she would sit here again, and talk to us. Oh, I wish she were come back! If papa were better she *would* come. They have been away four weeks, and we thought papa would get well so soon."

And as the little girl spoke, a tear rolled down her rosy cheek, quickly brushed away, however, by Lily's hand.

"Don't cry, Mary," she exclaimed. "Why do you cry? You see I don't. I am sure papa and mamma will come very soon now. There are a good many things that I am keeping to ask them. I want to know what makes the sky of such pretty colours, there, where the sun is. See, Mary, golden, and red, and purple! I asked nurse last night; but she did not know."

"And I want to know," said Mary, "where the sun goes when he is out of sight. I don't believe he stays all night behind that hill. I wish I knew." At this moment the door opened, and an elderly woman entered the room.

"My dears," she said, "you had better shut the window; it is late now, and almost time for you to go to bed. Your long holiday has tired you, I think;" she continued, fondly drawing the children towards her, and kissing them.

"No, nurse," said Lily, "we are not the least bit tired; but we want mamma back so much, don't we, Mary? And oh! nurse, what will you tell her about Mary and me? I mean, about our being good. Mary is always good; but I am not: and this morning, I . . . . . ."

"No, no," interrupted Mary, "I am not good, —I am very often naughty."

"Yes, my child," said the good old nurse; "we cannot even think a good thought without the help of God's Holy Spirit. Can you remember, Miss Lily, the verse you learnt this morning?"

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the

Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all," repeated Lily.

"Yes, my child," said the nurse, "it is even so. Of ourselves we can do no good thing. But God will send His Spirit into our hearts to help us to do and to think what is right, if we ask Him for it; and I trust my precious little ones *have* begun to seek for it. I trust that their little footsteps will never wander from the narrow path which leadeth unto life."

"Nurse," said Mary, timidly, after a pause, "when do you think mamma will come?"

"I cannot tell you, my dear. I thought I should have had a letter from your mamma to-day; perhaps I shall have one to-morrow. It is hard for you, my little ones, to be separated from them so long; but God is taking care of them; He gives to them and to us what is good for us; and if we have not anything that we wish to have, it is because God thinks it better to withhold it from us."

"Does God think it better to make papa ill?" said Mary.

"And," said Lily, "to keep mamma away from us so long?"

"Yes, my children; God does think it right to do both those things, or they would not be done; and though we cannot discover it, He has some good end in view. The great God orders everything in heaven and in earth. As we read in the Bible, not a sparrow falls to the ground without *His* will. We know that God cannot do wrong; and when He sends us sorrow, we must believe that it is in some way for our good, and submit to it willingly. This sort of trust is called FAITH.

Do you remember, Miss Lily, my telling you this morning, that if you ran so near to the brink of the river, you would fall in, and perhaps be drowned?"

"Yes, and I went away from the edge when you told me so."

"And why did you do so?"

"Because," said Lily, "I believed what you told me."

"Yes, my child. You had *faith* in me: you believed, that what I told you was true; and that it was told you for your good. Just so, you must believe in God. What He orders for you, you must believe to be wise and good. Many things may be directed in a way which you cannot now understand; but this is the case with us all, my children. God's ways are not like our ways, nor his thoughts like our thoughts. Now let us put all these toys into their places. We have talked long enough about this: besides, it is time for you to go to bed."

In a few minutes the little girls were undressed. The sweet hymn, beginning—

"Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,"

was repeated by each of them, in the soft, touching accents of childhood; and soon they were locked in each other's arms, fast asleep.

Mr. Fortescue, the father of these children, had passed in India much of the early part of his life; and had acquired there a considerable fortune. He had married during a sojourn of two years in England, and, with his wife, had returned to India.

From this period, his course had, for years, been one of prosperity and happy usefulness. Although

he was not a clergyman, he had laboured much for the spiritual good of the heathen around him; and, notwithstanding many difficulties and discouragements, he had been instrumental, together with his excellent wife, in leading, some at least, to the knowledge of Him, "whom to know is life eternal."

Oh! that the numbers of men and women, who, in full health and strength, yearly leave our shores for a life in India, would take more interest in the immense field of missionary labour which that country presents, and spend less thought and care upon their own worldly advancement, and their own pleasure!

But a heavy trial was in store for Mrs. Fortescue. The health of her husband, which had never been robust, began, some years after his return to India, gradually to fail. For some time, he steadily refused every entreaty to try a change of climate; but about the time of the birth of the twins, the renewed representations of friends and medical men, disposed him to think with less reluctance of a return to England. The actual voyage, however, was still indefinitely postponed.

The twin children inherited their father's delicacy of constitution; and, in their case, it was considered of the utmost importance that when the period of infancy should be passed, they should be removed from a climate, which, as Mrs. Fortescue was assured, usually proves fatal to English children who are exposed after their second or third year to its influences.

Two years passed away without any marked change in the health of Mr. Fortescue; but to the anxious eye of his wife, there was evidently no

real amendment. The health of the twins, however, continued good; and three Indian summers had passed over their little heads before their mother could decide to part with them. Amongst other plans, it was at one time proposed that they should be sent to an aunt in England, under the care of an old and faithful servant, who was known in the family by the name of "Nurse Allen." This old servant had nursed not only the children, but their mother, whom she had never left, and had accompanied to India.

But this idea was abandoned. It wanted but four weeks to the time fixed for the departure of the twins, when, to the indescribable joy of his wife, Mr. Fortescue entirely changed his plans, and finally determined that the whole family should return to England.

With much regret, they took leave of friends, long loved and cherished; and of scenes and places never to be forgotten. Crowds of persons assembled to witness their embarkation, and numbers mourned the loss of those who had done so much for the good of others. Mrs. Fortescue felt how much more severe a parting might have been in store for her; and as she clasped her babes to her bosom, she felt, that while they and their father were spared to her, she could cheerfully bear any changes or trouble that might befal her. Fervently she thanked God for having made her cup of happiness so full. The future she felt that she might safely leave in His hands.

The long voyage was safely completed; and a beautiful cottage in Westmoreland was fixed upon for the future home of the family.

Naturally fond of country life and scenery,

Mrs. Fortescue greatly enjoyed the change, and the children rapidly improved in health and strength. A change for the better was apparent, also, in the health of Mr. Fortescue; indeed, so striking was it, for the first few months after his landing in England, that even his wife began gradually to indulge a hope that he might be eventually restored to health. But her hopes were thrown to the ground, when, at the close of the summer, the slight cough, great langour, and other distressing symptoms gradually returned upon him; and from that time to the period of the commencement of my story, he had, with his wife, spent a few months of every year at Ilfracombe, the air of which place had been strongly recommended to him. The constant and undivided attention which her husband's state of health required, rendered it impossible for Mrs. Fortescue to take from home her young children; but she had the greatest confidence in leaving them under the care of Nurse Allen, from whom she knew that they would receive, in all essential points, the care of a mother.

This narrative commences during one of those annual separations between the twins and their parents. Mr. Fortescue had left Rose Cottage towards the middle of May; and was then so ill as to make it doubtful whether he could bear the journey. Upon his arrival at Ilfracombe, however, he rallied again for awhile; but Mrs. Fortescue had become persuaded that no hope of his recovery remained; and that she must immediately prepare herself for what might befal her very shortly—his death.

CHAPTER II.

When the little girls awoke the next morning the sun was shining brightly into their room, and all nature was alive and busy. The lark had left his dewy bed and was singing joyously on his upward flight; insects and birds were on the wing; everything seemed to have begun with gladness that bright summer's day.

The twins were early risers. They enjoyed their early morning walks when they gathered large bouquets of wild-flowers before the dew

was brushed from off them. Many people, however, find that it requires some little effort of self-denial to spring up early, even on the very finest mornings, however glad they may feel for having done so when they *are* up. Besides this, it is not always summer; but I may say that on wet and cold mornings, as well as on fair and sunny ones, Mary and Lily Fortescue persevered in the habit of early rising.

Now I fancy I hear some young reader exclaim, "How could they get up so soon? I am sure I could not!" Well, little reader, I would say to you, "try;" and "if at first you don't succeed," I would say, "try, try, try again!" Be assured that the young and healthy lose very many opportunities of improvement and pleasure, by spending in sleep the first and best hours of the day. It is an old and true saying, that "he who loses an hour in the morning, may look for it all day, but will never find it." But, after all, who that lives in the country, and enjoys the sweet sights and sounds of nature, can need any other inducement to "shake off dull sloth" and enjoy the sweetest part of a summer's morning? Take but one breath of the fresh spirit-stirring breeze, one glance at the fair fields, and trees, and flowers, before the fresh lustre of their bright morning dress has been dimmed by the scorching rays of the sun, and you will be rewarded for whatever effort it may cost you; your heart will—nay, *must*, for the time at least—be filled with love and gratitude to Him who has made this world so beautiful. But to return to the twin sisters.

On the morning which I have mentioned they were in rather more than usual haste to be out of

doors, for they had just come into possession of four young rabbits. By the desire of their parents, an excellent rabbit-hutch had been built in the lower part of the garden; but as it had been completed late on the previous evening, and its little occupants had not been transferred to their new abode until after the children's hour of retiring to rest, Mrs. Allen had thought it better to delay all mention of the matter until the next morning; and as they were seldom sent into that part of the garden, and had been carefully excluded from it during the erection of the new building, they knew nothing of the affair; and their surprise and pleasure on being told of these new pets was very great indeed.

As I have already said, they were in haste to be dressed, and Lily was rather impatient. She pulled and tugged at a string, until, in her haste, she had entangled it in a very hard knot.

No notice was taken by the nurse of this difficulty. It was Mrs. Fortescue's wish that nothing should be done for the children in the way of dressing and undressing, that they could be taught to do well for themselves; so, after having administered to them the customary shower-bath, and followed it up by the appliances necessary to warmth and comfort, the nurse began to busy herself about the arrangement of the apartment; the little girls, meanwhile, proceeding with the business of the toilette, and occasionally helping each other. After Mary had tried in vain for some time to disentangle the difficult knot, they privately agreed that it must be cut, or they should never be ready to go to the rabbits; but as Mary was going rather doubtfully for the scis-

sors, the nurse looked up and asked what she wished for? The children then, both speaking at once, showed her the knot, which they said it was *impossible* to undo.

"Few knots are impossible to undo," said Mrs. Allen. "Let me see if I can help you, my dear. Miss Mary, you can finish dressing."

Mary went on dressing, but very slowly. Lily stood quietly while the nurse endeavoured to conquer the difficulty. She said nothing, but she looked and felt very impatient; and when she saw Mary preparing to put on her hat, the tears came into her eyes.

"Nurse," said little Mary, "I'll wait for Lily, may I?"

"If you please, my dear; and now, Miss Lily, this knot is untied, and you must be more patient in future. Make haste now, and finish dressing yourself; but for this knot you might have been out some minutes ago."

"But you might have cut the knot," said Lily, who was still sullen.

"Yes, but that is not a neat thing to do, and seldom necessary. When you make knots from being impatient," added Mrs. Allen, "I shall never cut them."

Lily said no more, and when she was dressed the children said their prayers and then ran off into the garden and eagerly opened their new rabbit-hutch. The examination was most satisfactory. A young rabbit sate in each of the four corners, and very shyly they all looked at their new mistresses; indeed there was a visible panting in the sides of one little creature, which was quite white.

"Lily, look! how frightened that little white

one is!" exclaimed Mary. "What can frighten it so much? We don't hurt it."

"No, Mary, but you know we are strangers. If I had one in my hands now I would make it know me. Look! you stay here and spread out your arms for fear the rabbits should try to get out, and I will creep in and try to get hold of one."

Mary did so, though in some fear as to the result of the enterprise; and Lily, creeping into the hutch, succeeded in capturing the white rabbit, which seemed, however, far from pleased at the abrupt manner in which the acquaintance was made. Lily's rough handling might have led to some unpleasant results had not Mary induced her to put down her prize, by crying out that the three other rabbits were trying to get out, and that she could not keep them in. Lily's being in the hutch, she added, rendered them more frightened than ever. On hearing this, Lily emerged from the hutch, and by their united efforts the rabbits were effectually secured.

From the meal of the previous evening there was a little boiled oatmeal left in a flower-pot saucer, but no green food; and the children ran to the garden-shed to get their flower-baskets, that they might fill them with grass.

In front of the cottage, and separated from the grounds adjoining it, was a small meadow; it was partly enclosed by a thick hedge, but at the bottom of it there was a footpath and a stile which led into other fields; and on the other side of the path was Westmoreland's beautiful river, the Eden.

The children often played in this meadow, but they were not allowed to go down alone so far as

the path. On this morning they were very happy, running about to find the longest and thickest grass, and other herbage. Lily seemed to have quite forgotten the mischances of the morning. Her basket was quickly filled; and as soon as she had also filled her pinafore with flowers, she sate down to make them up into a bouquet while she waited for Mary.

Lily presented a rich subject for a painter. Her wide-spreading straw hat had fallen back, displaying fully her large laughing eyes, and her blooming cheeks; and her soft brown hair fell in natural waves over her broad white forehead. The very sunbeams seemed to linger amongst those auburn locks, as if they really desired to "turn each tress to gold." The child was intent upon arranging her bouquet of wild-flowers, briar-roses, daisies, &c., so that their colours might be seen in as strong contrast with each other as possible.

When Mary had filled her basket, she called to Lily, and suggested that the supplies of food should be shown to Mrs. Allen. "Perhaps," said she, "all this is not good for rabbits."

Lily agreed, though she did not seem to think there was any occasion for the precaution; and the children, accordingly, ran into the house, and up stairs, at their utmost speed; Lily taking two steps at a time, and assuring Mary that the rabbits must be hungry, and that, therefore, they must make haste. They found the nurse preparing to come out to them.

"My dears," said she, when the baskets had been examined, and part of their contents removed, "I am very glad you came to me with

your baskets, before emptying them into the hutch. This is hemlock, and poisonous; if you had given it to your rabbits, they would probably have been killed. It is well my little Lily was not so impatient to feed the rabbits, as she was to be dressed this morning, or this meal might have been their last. This is fine long grass, but there is rather too much of it; rabbits should not have a great quantity of green food. Take them what is left in the baskets, and at breakfast time you shall supply them with something else. They like many things besides grass. I will go with you now, for I have not seen the rabbits yet, and then it will be time for you to come in to breakfast."

"Nurse," said Mary, as they all walked together into the garden, "we will always ask you first, before we do a thing, and then it will be sure to be right. How sorry we should have been if the rabbits had died!"

"Yes," said Lily, "and I will try and not be impatient again; I will ask God to help me."

"That is right, my dear," said Mrs. Allen, "ask for God's help, and strive yourself against your impatient temper; and you will be enabled to overcome it. But here we are! which of you will open the door?"

Lily quickly unfastened the bolt; and the children watched with much pleasure the rabbits eagerly nibbling the fresh green herbage. They repeatedly declared that there never were such pretty rabbits, and seemed quite satisfied with the praises bestowed upon them by the nurse.

When they went in to breakfast, Mrs. Allen had a saucepan brought into the room, and, while the children were taking their milk and dry toast,

she prepared a thick mixture of oatmeal and water, with which the children immediately ran off to the rabbit-hutch, it being impossible to persuade them to finish first their own breakfast; nor would they indeed return to the house, until every morsel of the food had been eaten. Mary then told Mrs. Allen that the rabbits had eaten all that had been taken to them; and that she was sure they wanted more directly.

The nurse smiled. "*You* will take all your breakfast, Miss Mary," she said; "but I don't think you will want anything more till dinner time."

When breakfast was over, Mrs. Allen took the children into the room which has been already described, and which was called the "morning room." The twins then read aloud the 23d Psalm; and when they had finished, their good old friend talked to them for a few minutes about the meaning of it.

"Why," said Mary, "is the Lord called a shepherd?"

"My dear," said the nurse, "if you were to see a flock of sheep and lambs come into that meadow, you would see a shepherd with them, to lead them, and take care of them. The shepherd would see that they did not stray from the field, and that nothing came near to hurt them. At night they would be penned together in a fold, or in some place of safety. Well, men and women, and children like you, if they love their Saviour, and keep His commandments, are sheep and lambs of His fold. Jesus Christ died on the Cross that all men might be saved; and those who are sorry for their sins and turn to

Him in faith, are taken into His fold, and shall want nothing. As a shepherd leads his flock into the freshest pastures, and takes care that they shall want nothing that is good for them; so God, our Shepherd, will lead us into safe and pleasant paths, if we trust to His guidance, and follow Him willingly, even as sheep follow their shepherd."

"But," said Lily, "sheep and lambs don't always keep with the shepherd, they run away. Don't you remember, Mary, we saw a sheep running away yesterday when nurse had gone into the cottage, and the man was following it?"

"My child," said the nurse, "sheep and lambs do often run away, and so stray from the fold. The shepherd seeks them as you saw yesterday; and if he were not to find and bring them back again, they might be entirely lost. Just so it is with Christ's fold. *His* sheep are apt to stray; and if they were to stray away, and not be brought back again, they would be lost for ever. Our good Shepherd knows that His paths are the best for us, and that they are the only pleasant paths; He knows, that if we do not walk in them, we cannot be really happy even in this world, and that in the world to come we shall be miserable for ever and ever; and therefore He grieves over us, and in many ways He seeks us when we depart from Him. Sometimes He sends sickness and trouble upon us, that we may be reminded that we have been forsaking and forgetting His ways, and walking in our own. He causes our consciences to warn us when we do wrong, and in Heaven He intercedes for us, that we may not be left to perish eternally. When we return to the

fold, there is joy in heaven. Yes, my children, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth. Do you understand me now, Miss Mary?"

"I think I do," said the little girl; "but," she added, in a low tone, "can *God's* sheep ever be lost?"

"He will not suffer any to be lost, my dear, who follow and love Him, and pray to be kept safe in His fold. He will bring them to heaven, which is a beautiful and glorious place, prepared only for those who, while they are on earth, love God, and who die in His faith and fear. All others go away at last into everlasting punishment."

Mary shuddered.

"May you, my own dear children," said the nurse, as she fondly kissed the upturned, earnest little faces before her, "be ever lambs of Christ's fold. Then you will be safe and happy while you live in this world; and if it should be God's pleasure to call you early to himself, you will be for ever secure in the arms of your heavenly Shepherd, who has died and redeemed you to God by His blood."

Mrs. Allen now left the children for a short time, while she went about some affairs of her own; but before leaving the room she gave to each of them some easy, plain work, with which she wished them to occupy themselves during her absence. They had both learned to work fairly for their age; they could also do sums in the first two rules of arithmetic, and write a tolerably good large round hand. Mrs. Fortescue frequently received little notes from her children; but most

of their lessons were suspended during her absence from home. The twins did nothing with Mrs. Allen, but read and write, and learn every evening a text or hymn.

Hemming two sides of a towel took some little time, and Lily did not like work at all. She worked more quickly, but less carefully than Mary did; nor was she generally so painstaking as was her sister. Mary was naturally of a gentle and submissive temper, and did what was expected of her quietly and well. Lily, on the contrary, was hasty in her movements and in her temper, and was energetic in all that she undertook, but she lacked Mary's steady perseverance. She was apt to hurry from one thing to another, and not unfrequently to leave unfinished what she had begun. She was, however, a sensitive, feeling child, and had a most affectionate and generous disposition.

Mary, too, had faults. Indeed, what child has not? In her constitutional quietness there was sometimes a little disposition to indolence; and she was not unfrequently rather obstinate. Her natural disposition was, however, quite as affectionate and as generous as her sister's, but it was more shy and retiring. Unlike Lily, Mary required inciting to exertion, *drawing out*.

They seated themselves on little stools opposite each other by the window, and were soon laughing and talking merrily over their work. The project of the day before to make a house of slates, seemed to be quite laid aside. When Lily was reminded of it by Mary, she replied, "Oh, but you know we have rabbits now;" and here I may remark, that, for a time at least, everything seemed likely to give way to these new treasures. All

that morning the dolls were never once taken in hand, or even looked at; and it was the same with the other toys.

Various plans were proposed as to the times for feeding the rabbits, and Mary informed her sister, that she had heard Mrs. Allen tell John, the gardener's boy, that he was to be careful to keep the hutch in nice order; and that every day at noon, and oftener if it were wet, he was to ask the gardener for some vegetables, and put them beside it, so that, unless the weather were very bad indeed, they might have the pleasure of always feeding the rabbits themselves.

This was declared by Lily to be an excellent arrangement, and the next thing to be done was to settle as to the special ownership of the rabbits. Now there was one grey and white, one all grey, one quite black, and a little white one. Lily at once decided that Mary had better appropriate the white one, for that it was so very shy she would never be able to make it know her; and as Mary had taken a great fancy to the black one, Lily chose the two grey ones, which she declared were the plumpest and prettiest of the whole set.

This important point having been thus amicably arranged, there was a knock at the door, and Margaret, the housemaid, soon afterwards came into the room holding in each hand a wooden box, made of plain deal. She told the children that these boxes were intended for the rabbit hutch, and that the carpenter was waiting to know if they were of the proper size and kind. The children took them from the hands of the servant, and ran off with them into the nursery. The

nurse pronounced them to be quite right, but said that she must order one other box of a different shape to be made; and taking the little girls with her she went to give the necessary directions to the carpenter.

It was explained to the children that the hole which they observed at the end of each box, was intended to accommodate a rabbit when it might wish for retirement; since, if it had not some such convenience, it would try to burrow; that is, to make a hole for itself under ground.

The twins were much pleased with the new boxes, and Mrs. Allen directed that they should be placed in the hutch. While she was returning to the morning room with the children, the postman's rap was heard, and one of the servants ran after her with a letter.

One glance at it was sufficient. The anxious eye of the nurse fell upon the broad black edge and seal, and bursting into tears she tore it open. A few hurried agitated lines in Mrs. Fortescue's own handwriting, told of her terrible bereavement; and Mrs. Allen was requested to have everything in readiness for her return home that day week.

The faithful old servant threw the letter from her, and covered her face with her hands. With wondering faces the twins stood beside her; suddenly the truth seemed to burst upon them, and falling upon their knees, they hid their little faces in Mrs. Allen's lap, and sobbed aloud.

CHAPTER III.

A WEEK had passed away, and in the drawing-room of Rose Cottage sate the little Fortescues. It was evening—not such an evening as I have already described—all was gloomy within and without; the rain had fallen in heavy torrents during the day, and the sky was covered with dark clouds.

The twins were dressed in deep mourning, and both looked very sad. Lily's eyes were heavy

and swelled with weeping, and Mary was very pale. They sate in hourly expectation of their mother's return, and spoke very little to each other; but they listened to every sound. Presently the sound of carriage wheels was distinctly heard, and starting up the children ran out into the hall. Mrs. Allen and the other servants were assembled there. A close travelling carriage drove rapidly up the approach to the house, and the next moment Mrs. Fortescue was standing amongst her servants, and her children were clinging to her.

"My children! my own precious little ones!" was all she could say. She was weeping bitterly.

Mrs. Allen led her into the drawing-room, and removed her bonnet and shawl. Then Mrs. Fortescue looked sadly around, and a host of painful recollections seemed to press upon her, for with difficulty she suppressed the violence of her emotion. The old nurse respectfully took the hand of her mistress, and in a low voice uttered a few words of consolation and sympathy. She then hastened to procure for her the refreshment of which she stood so much in need, and the bereaved mother was left alone with her children. What passed during that precious half hour, no human eye saw, or ear heard; it is known only to Him to whom all hearts are open, and who heareth the cry of the fatherless and the widow.

When the little girls and their mother sate down to tea, tears had been wiped away, and the twins, in all the happy forgetfulness of childhood, were soon talking to their mother of their little plans and projects, and of many things which they

had seen and done during her absence from home; and though Mrs. Fortescue spoke little, she could listen with calmness. Earnestly she had striven to cast her burden upon the Lord, and to submit cheerfully to His holy will and pleasure. She looked at her loving children, and thought of the many blessings which were yet left to her; and deeply as she mourned her loss, she felt that she did not sorrow as one without hope, and that her fervent prayers for resignation to the divine will were heard and answered. Yes, Mrs. Fortescue felt that she could say from the heart, "Thy will be done;" that with Eli of old, she could exclaim, "It is the Lord! Let him do what seemeth him good."

When late in the evening Mrs. Allen entered the room to take the little girls to bed, Mrs. Fortescue thanked her in few words, but with a heart full of gratitude, for all her love and care of them. The old nurse bowed her head in answer; she could not trust herself to speak.

The next day was Sunday. Mrs. Fortescue rose early, and spent some time alone in her own room. Then she went to the nursery. The nurse had gone down stairs to breakfast, but neither of the little girls had yet awakened. The mother stooped down, and softly kissed each little sweet face; still they did not stir. Both looked as if they had gone to sleep with saddened thoughts. Mary, especially, had a troubled countenance, which it grieved Mrs. Fortescue to see. Again she kissed her, and Mary this time opened her eyes, and fixed them upon her mother's face. One little start she gave, but instantly recollection seemed to return to her, and in a moment

she was in her mother's arms, and covering her face with kisses.

When Lily awoke, which she did very shortly, she was not a little surprised to see her mother already in the nursery, and Mary on her lap. Starting up, she exclaimed, "Mary, how long has mamma been here? You should have called me." But her mother's fond kiss and smile made her face brighten considerably; and with a merry laugh she clasped her little arms round Mrs. Fortescue's neck, and tried to bring down her face to the pillow. Mrs. Fortescue did not leave the nursery until the children were dressed. She observed with pleasure Lily's manifest improvement in orderly habits, and saw in many little things the care which had been taken by the nurse to carry out her own wishes and plans.

When breakfast was over, Mrs. Fortescue read with the children the gospel for the day. Then she told them that it was her wish that they should commit regularly to memory, the collect for each Sunday in the year, to begin from that day.

"Shall we always learn it on Sunday, mamma?" said Lily.

"No, my love; I think it will be best for you to learn it always on the Saturday evening; and then you will be ready to say it to me the first thing on Sunday. I should like you, my children, to make the collect that you learn on the Saturday evening, one of your prayers every morning and evening during the week; and as it will always be explained to you, I hope that by this plan, it will become fixed in your memory. And now, dear children, let us sing the morning hymn."

They did so; and the soft voices of the twins, mingled very sweetly with the rich, full notes of their mother. When the hymn was finished, Mrs. Fortescue told the children that they might go and stroll in the garden until church-time. Just as they were leaving the room, she asked if the rabbits had been remembered since her arrival at home?

Lily looked aghast at this question, Mary coloured, and said "no."

"Well," said Mrs. Fortescue smiling, "it is not much to be wondered at, that my return has caused you to forget almost everything else. I do not wish you to gather food for them on Sundays; but there will always for the future be some food placed by the door of the hutch at the proper times; so I hope that you will never forget them again."

The children thanked their mother, and ran off.

While they were out, they gathered each a small bouquet of flowers, and took them in to their mother. Before placing them in a vase, Mrs. Fortescue took two rose-buds, and a sprig or two of jasmine, and dividing them equally, she fixed a little bunch in the sash of each of the children. Then she took from the table two purple morocco cases, fastened with silver clasps, and gave one to each of her little daughters. With their mother's help the twins opened them; and were delighted to find that each case contained a small, but beautiful Bible, and a Prayer-book similarly bound.

"You can now read so nicely," said Mrs. Fortescue, "that I think I could not have given you anything more likely to be useful. I know you can find the different parts of the service; and I

hope, my children, that you will take care of your pretty books."

"May we use them every Sunday, Mamma?" said Lily.

"Yes, my love, you may; they are made for use; only be careful of them. Now I must go and prepare for church."

They had some little distance to walk; for the church stood quite at the other end of the village. Very rough and simple was the style in which it was built; but it was almost surrounded by trees; and in one respect it differed widely from the majority of north country village churches; being covered with thick ivy, out of which there peeped here and there a wild rose.

Mary and Lily ran on before, each carrying one of their mother's books. The rain of the preceding day had made the air sweet and clear; and it was, for the time of the year, quite a fresh, cool morning. Leaving Lily, little Mary stole back to her mother's side.

"Mary," said Mrs. Fortescue, "what does that deep blue sky make you think of?"

"Of Papa," said Mary in a low tone. "Mamma, what do you think Papa is doing now?"

"Keeping an *eternal* Sabbath in that 'better land' beyond that fair blue sky: enjoying pleasures which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive; singing praises unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

Lily was standing in the little porch when her mother and Mary rejoined her. As she entered the church Mrs. Fortescue dropped her thick veil to screen herself from observation. To maintain

her composure required a very great effort. As she walked up the little aisle between her children, she remembered who it was, whose feeble arm had supported her in that very place but a few short months ago; and her step became unsteady and faltering. The old place, and the old faces around her, forcibly brought back former times, and were associated in a thousand touching ways with the memory of her husband. A considerable portion of the little congregation were clad in mourning; and all, young and old, showed, by the solemnity of their demeanour, their affectionate remembrance of their departed friend and benefactor. Mrs. Fortescue, though affected almost to tears, could not but be gratified by this universal demonstration of feeling. Mary and Lily, meanwhile, looked gravely around, apparently quite unconscious of the many glances, full of interest and pity, which were bestowed upon them.

The clergyman preached from the text, "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

Although no direct allusion was made to the recent event, it was evident that the good rector thought of it; and that he deeply pitied Mrs. Fortescue. One quick glance he gave at the mourning figure which sate with bent head in one corner of the pew before him; and it was with a slightly tremulous voice that he quoted at the conclusion of his sermon, the following passage from the VIIth chapter of Revelation:—

"And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are

these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

During many parts of the service, Mrs. Fortescue's tears had fallen fast; but as the sermon proceeded, her heavy brow seemed to clear; her sad care-worn face to brighten; and as the last words were uttered, she was enabled to look up at the benevolent countenance of the clergyman, with a face almost as radiant with hope and joy as his own.

CHAPTER IV.

The twins were sitting with their mother in the breakfast room the next morning, and were busily engaged with their lessons, when a loud rap at the front door was heard, and visitors were announced. Mrs. Fortescue took the children with her into the drawing-room.

On her entrance, a lady and gentleman arose to greet her. They were Mr. and Mrs. Browne, who were inhabitants of the village. Two children were with them; a son and daughter. The boy was the "little Willie" before mentioned: his half-sister was two or three years older than himself, and was called "Annie."

The two families lived near to each other; and

the children met occasionally; but Mr. and Mrs. Browne were merely acquaintances, not friends of Mrs. Fortescue.

"My dear Mrs. Fortescue," exclaimed the lady, advancing, as it seemed, with much eager interest, and retaining the hand of Mrs. Fortescue as she spoke, "how delighted I am to see you again! and how are these charming children? Annie, my love, and Willie, come and speak to your little friends."

Annie needed no second bidding. She was quickly by the side of the twins, talking incessantly. Willie, however, though beckoned by Lily, refused to move; but stood close by his father's knee. Mr. Browne told him kindly to "go and speak to the little ladies." Still the boy did not stir. He put his finger into his mouth, and looked poutingly at his mother.

"Oh, you naughty boy!" exclaimed Mrs. Browne; "how can you let these sweet good little girls see you so naughty? I am quite sure *they* never behave so ill." Turning to Mrs. Fortescue, she continued, "Do you know, I have had *such* trouble with that child this morning." Then in a low voice, but in tones which rendered every word distinctly audible, she gave the full particulars of a most painful contest which had taken place between her and her son; concluding her communication with the following injudicious speech:—

"Now Annie, there, dear child, is as different as possible from Willie. She is so amiable, and is always trying how to please me. People tell me, I spoil my children; but that girl is one of those who can't be spoiled. What to do with Willie, I don't know. He seems to me to become worse and worse every day."

Mrs. Fortescue listened to all this, silently; but with a countenance strongly indicative of disapprobation. Her keen eye fell upon Annie, who had ceased talking, and was attentively listening to her mother, with an air of quiet self-satisfaction. She was dressed in a fashionable, expensive style, utterly unfit for a girl of her age; and formed a striking contrast to the twins, in their simple mourning attire. Turning from her, Mrs. Fortescue gave one quick glance at the little boy. He did not cry, nor shed a tear; but there was in his young face an effort at self-control, painful to witness. The deep colour which overspread his face, was not so much the blush of shame, as the flush of wounded feeling, and of angry pride. The boy sate like a statue, until he caught the mild gaze of Mrs. Fortescue. Then his large black eyes filled with tears, which the next instant were rolling down his crimsoned cheeks. Lily, who had been for some moments by his side, now gently drew him away to a distant bay window, near which Mary and Annie Wood were standing.

Mrs. Browne, notwithstanding the presence of the children, and the many hints and interruptions of her husband, who not only pitied his son, but plainly read in Mrs. Fortescue's countenance, her dislike to the subject, would have continued to discuss the misdemeanours of the morning, which were certainly of a serious kind. Mrs. Fortescue, however, determined to hear no more of it in the presence of the children, turned quickly round, and desired Mary and Lily to take their visitors into the garden, and show them the rabbits and the swing.

The children obeyed most gladly; but they had not a very pleasant time together in the

garden. Willie wished Lily and Mary to swing him; and he pressed for swing after swing, until they were at last obliged to leave him to walk with Annie, who was impatiently waiting for them. Willie was inclined to be angry, because the twins could not swing him so long as he wished. Annie did not seem to care either for the swing or the rabbits; and even the sight of a very pretty flock of wood pigeons failed to interest her. She was, however, in high spirits, and talked eagerly to the twins, asking them many questions about their lessons and amusements. The little boy, in the meanwhile, was left very much to himself. For some time, he amused himself by sitting by the rabbit-hutch, looking at the rabbits which were all nibbling at the fresh cabbage stalks that he held to them. Willie liked to watch them; he thought they were beautiful rabbits, and that their hutch was the nicest one he had ever seen. Presently a new idea came into his mind, and he called to Lily, who with her sister and Annie, just then appeared in view.

"Lily, Lily," he said. But Lily did not hear him; she and Mary were intently listening to what appeared to be a very interesting story.

"Dear me!" said Annie, "what does the boy want now? Wait a moment, Lily," she added; "I have just finished this."

But Lily at once disengaged herself from Annie. "Well?" she said.

"Have you any cats here?" inquired Willie.

"Cats!" said Lily, with a look of horror, "no; don't you know they kill rabbits? We had a kitten once; but nurse gave it away when the rabbits came."

"You are sure?"

"Yes, quite," said the little girl, as she ran away.

"Very well," said Willie to himself, "then, little bunnies, you shall have a run on the green grass!" and taking them by two at a time, the little boy immediately took all the rabbits out of the hutch, and placed them on the smooth lawn in the middle of the flower-garden. Delighted, apparently, with the sense of freedom, the rabbits first looked shyly around; but their little paws pressed soft velvety turf instead of paved ground; and, as if by one accord, they started and ran about at their utmost speed.

They did not, however, go off the lawn, and Willie watched them with great delight, thinking how pretty they were, and how much good the change would do them. By and by, however, the rabbits appeared to become tired of their new position, which up to that moment had so delighted them, and to wish, like human creatures, for a still wider sphere of action. The little white one overstepped the boundary; and, in another moment, all the others had followed its example, and were scampering in different parts of the garden.

Fancy, reader, the dismay of the twins, when, at a turn in the shrubbery where they were walking, the black rabbit met their astonished eyes.

"Mary, Mary, look!" said Lily.

Mary stood aghast at the discovery. "It's Willie! he has done it! the naughty, mischievous boy, has let all the rabbits out!" said Annie eagerly.

Only part of this speech was heard by the little Fortescues. They had started off in search of Willie; and they found him in the flower-garden,

peeping about amongst trees and flowers, behind fences and bushes. He had taken captive the white rabbit, which had made its escape only to pant for a few minutes, surrounded by roses, in the summer-house; and now Willie stood listening, with a troubled countenance, to the reproaches of the twins.

"Willie, how could you! how could you let the rabbits out! O dear! we shall never get them again! they are gone for ever."

"Willie, I did not think you would have done it! it was very unkind of you!" said Mary, whose fondness for the rabbits was even greater than Lily's; and as she spoke, she burst into tears, and covered her face.

"I have caught one," said Willie disconsolately, "and I dare say we shall get them all back; so don't cry any more, Mary. Come, let us all go and look for them! we shall find them again, never fear."

"What will mamma say?" said Annie, who had now joined the group. "She *will* be angry!"

Willie ran off, without answering.

"Don't cry, Mary," said Lily; "I believe we shall get them back. He did not think they would go so far; and he looks so sorry! Come, Mary, I am as sorry as you; but I do not cry, because it would do no good."

"But he will never find them," said Mary, "nor catch them either; he is so little. Besides, dear me! no one knows where they are now."

"They must be in the garden," said Lily. "Think how high the walls are! they could not get over them, and the gate is shut; I see it is. Come!"

The children ran off, followed by Annie, who

was curious to know the result of the search. To their great joy, the twins saw the gardener in the grounds, diligently assisting in the pursuit. Lily clapped her hands at this welcome sight; Mary heaved a deep sigh of relief.

"They will be caught now," she said. "We might have thought of Wilson; he is so kind always!"

"Yes," said Lily, "but at first we were too sorry. Let us go and stand by the hutch to be ready for them. They are bringing one now."

Mary agreed; and, with great satisfaction, they watched the gardener replace the black rabbit securely in the hutch.

"That is right," he said, with a smile, to the children. "Just stay there, young ladies, and I'll bring them all back; the ground is wet for your feet down below."

The gardener fulfilled his promise in a business-like manner; and when the last wanderer had been restored to its home, Wilson left them, after kindly telling Willie that he had better not in future let rabbits out of their hutch, unless he were quite sure that he could easily get them back again.

"What made you do it?" said Lily.

"Why," said Willie, who was out of breath from his recent exertions, "they seemed so tame, that I never thought they would want to run off that soft grass. When I was at my uncle's in the summer, the boys used to let their rabbits run about on the green as much as they liked, and they could always catch them again at any time; so, when you said there were no cats here, I thought I would let these have a run."

"Never mind, Willie," said Mary; "they are

all back again. I am sorrry I said you were unkind: you were not a bit unkind; so now we will all go and rest in the summer-house."

During this time Mr. and Mrs. Browne were talking to Mrs. Fortescue about their son Willie. Mr. Browne said that he had lately thought it would be better to send Willie to a good school; and he asked Mrs. Fortescue if she did not think so too? Mr. Browne added that the little boy had himself declared that morning to his wife, that he wished to go to school.

After a few moments' consideration, Mrs. Fortescue said,—

"Yes; I do think, under the circumstances, that it would be better for Willie to go to school;" and she added, "I have young friends at two or three schools that I could mention; and if you will permit me to help you in the selection of a school for him, I will spare no pains in making the fullest inquiries."

In the midst of many thanks from Mr. and Mrs. Browne for this kind offer, the door opened, and Willie put his curly head into the room.

"Papa," said the little boy, "come and see the bunnies."

"Not just now, my boy; come here, and let Mrs. Fortescue see a bright-looking little boy again."

Willie went up to his father, and Mr. Browne, fondly putting back the glossy hair that shaded his forehead, said,—

"I'll take your advice, Mrs. Fortescue; this boy shan't be quite spoiled, if I can help it."

Mrs. Fortescue smiled; and turning to Mrs. Browne, who was rising to take leave, she said, "It would give me pleasure to see more of my little

friend. Will you allow both your children to spend the remainder of the day with me?"

The invitation was warmly accepted, and with cordial adieux Mr. and Mrs. Browne took their departure.

Scarcely had they left the house before Willie had nestled close to Mrs. Fortescue's side, and was as happy as possible. Anxious to divert his mind from the painful occurrences of the morning, Mrs. Fortescue talked to him of many little things in which he was interested; but the little boy was evidently thinking of something else. Looking up suddenly into her face, he said, "I'm to go to school! do you know?"

"Yes, my boy; and I hear that you told your mother this morning that it was your own wish to go; is that so?"

Willie blushed, and hung his head, as he answered,—

"I do wish it sometimes, and I did this morning; but sometimes I think that I could not bear to go."

"Well, but, Willie, do you know that I think it would be the best thing you could do? and, as your father asked my opinion, I told him so this morning."

"Did you?" said the boy, in great surprise; "and when am I to go?"

"That I do not know. There are many arrangements to be made; but I am to help your father and mother in settling to what school you shall go; and I will try, my dear little boy, to make everything as comfortable for you as possible, for I love you almost as dearly as if you were my own son."

Saying this, Mrs. Fortescue stooped down, and

imprinted a mother's kiss upon the noble brow of the child.

"You love me," said Willie, "and yet you advise papa to send me away? My own dear mamma would not have let me go; she used to say, that until I was twelve years old I should not leave her. But oh! I was never passionate then, as I am now! Then there was some one to love and care for me; now there is no one. Oh! I wish I had but died too!" and with a passionate sob, the boy hid his face in Mrs. Fortescue's lap.

"Willie," said she, and the tears rushed to her eyes as she spoke, "how can you say so? Have you forgotten the kind, indulgent father whom God has given you? Does *he* not love and care for you? Is not your every reasonable wish gratified, your most trifling want supplied? How has he loved you from your cradle, Willie! How has he patiently borne with your many acts of impatience, and with your passionate temper! How often have you grieved and offended him, and he has forgiven you, even as he did this morning!"

"Yes," said the little boy, "I know I have been ungrateful. My papa does love me, but my mamma does *not;* you cannot think SHE is kind to me! She does not even punish me herself. Only this morning she made the footman whip me; but papa told her that he would not have that done again. And yesterday——"

"Hush, Willie!" said Mrs. Fortescue, gravely. "I must hear no more of this. You were a very naughty boy this morning, and nothing can excuse your conduct; but I believe you are ashamed of it, and sorry for it. Now, listen to me, my child," continued Mrs. Fortescue, in a more gentle tone,

for the boy's tears were falling fast, "You say your mother does not love you; have you tried to win her love, by being good and obedient?"

For a few moments no answer was returned to this question, and a deep blush spread over the ingenuous face of the boy, as he said in a low tone, "No; but she is not my real mother, so I did not care about pleasing her."

"Just so," said Mrs. Fortescue; "but, my child, that is not right; and, Willie, you will never be the happy, joyous boy that you were two years ago, so long as you continue to indulge this feeling and temper. It is true that Mrs. Browne is not your real mother; but it has pleased God that she should take the place of your real mother in the care and guidance of you, and you owe to her the duty of a child. Can you expect to meet with as much love and favour from her, now that you are daily disobedient and passionate, as she no doubt would feel for you, if you were constantly trying how best to please and obey her? My boy! let there be a change in your own conduct; beg of God to help you to turn over a new leaf; and then you will see a very great change in the conduct of your mamma towards you. Tell me, will you try to be a better boy?"

Willie threw his arms round Mrs. Fortescue's neck, and promised her that he would. "But oh!" he continued, "if I could only be with you always, I should not be so often naughty! When I am at home with you this way, it seems as if I had my own mamma by me again. Her eyes were blue like yours, and her hair was just as curly and soft; and she was gentle and good like you, and she never scolded. Oh, mamma, mamma, if I could only see you again!"

"My boy," said Mrs. Fortescue, as she tenderly raised his head, and parted the thick curls from his troubled brow, "do not forget that, though you cannot see her again in this world, she need not be lost to you for ever. If you love God, and trust in Him, you shall go to her, though she cannot return to you. Think of this, Willie. God has given you many blessings, though He has taken one from you for a while. The clothes you wear, the food you eat, your comfortable home, and your kind friends, are all blessings from His hand, and proofs of His love; and every hour of the day and night He keeps you in health and strength, and guards you from harm and danger. Now dry your eyes, Willie. This is to be a happy, merry day. We will go into the garden, and see what they are all doing. They will wonder what has become of you all this time."

The three little girls met Mrs. Fortescue at the garden door. "Mamma, where is Willie?" exclaimed the twins, before they had observed that the little boy was following their mother. Annie asked the same question, and the next moment seeing Willie, she exclaimed, "Why! you have been crying! what's the matter now?"

Willie ran past her without speaking; then turning to Mrs. Fortescue, she said,—

"Are papa and mamma gone, ma'am?"

"Yes, they are; but I have obtained from them permission for you to spend the remainder of the day with us."

"Oh, that is charming news!" said Annie; "and Willie may stay too, I suppose, as he has not gone home?"

"Certainly; I very much wish to have Willie with me to-day."

"I hope he will behave well, that's all," replied Annie, as she moved away with the twins. "Poor mamma has such trouble with him! naughty boy that he is!"

On hearing this last observation, Mrs. Fortescue called Annie back, and the twins followed. "Annie," said she, taking her by the hand, and looking steadily in her face, "I am anxious that this should be a happy holiday for you all; so I must request that not the slightest allusion may be made to Willie's conduct this morning, either to him or in his presence."

Annie looked rather surprised at this plain speaking, and answered, rather pertly,—

"Oh, very well, Mrs. Fortescue; I am sure I don't want to speak about it; I should not have thought of such a thing."

"It is of no sort of consequence to me," said Mrs. Fortescue, "what you may have thought or wished in the matter; only be careful to do exactly as I tell you."

With a very doubtful expression, Annie's eye followed Mrs. Fortescue's graceful figure, as she left the garden; then looking down upon her dress, she said, "I wonder if mamma will send me an evening dress; this will not do to dine in."

"Why not?" said Mary.

"Oh, because it is a morning dress. Don't you know that people always dress for dinner? What must I do? I suppose you both keep the same dresses on?"

"Yes," said Lily; "we shall have to wash our faces and hands, and brush our hair; but that is done in a minute. Your hair will take longer to do; it is all curled;" and Lily glanced admiringly at Annie's thick clustering curls.

At this moment the children heard Willie call to them. He was peeping into the rabbit-hutch, and he asked the twins if they would let him feed the rabbits? The little girls willingly consented; they knew that Annie would not like to pick food for them, especially in her handsome silk dress, and they were sure that it would not be polite in them to leave their visitor; so they gave Willie both the baskets, and he set off directly to the meadow. At the garden door he met Mrs. Fortescue.

"Where are you going, Willie?" said she. "I was coming to advise you all either to sit in the arbour, or to come into the house; it is becoming so very warm."

"I'm not hot," said Willie; "but I should like to stay in the garden, as you have come; only I said I would feed the rabbits, and I was just going to the meadow for grass."

"Well, my boy, do as you like. I dare say I shall be in the garden when you come back; but the morning is now so warm, that I almost think you had better let the gardener feed them."

"Well, I will," said Willie; and Mrs. Fortescue immediately called to the gardener, who was at work near them, and requested him to see that the rabbits were properly attended to. Then she led the way to a beautiful summer-house, into which the little girls had already retired. Annie was loud in her admiration of the "sweet rural shade," as she called it, when Mrs. Fortescue entered.

"Oh, mamma!" exclaimed Mary, "I am so glad you have come! Now we shall be so snug, shall we not, Lily?" And drawing their mother to the most shady corner, the twins seated themselves closely on each side of her.

"And where are your friends to sit?" said Mrs.

Fortescue, laughing. "You are forgetting them, I think."

"Oh, I am very well placed, thank you, Mrs. Fortescue," said Annie, who had seated herself on the other side of Lily.

"Willie," said Mrs. Fortescue, "do you run up into the drawing-room, and bring here the little stool that you were sitting upon this morning; and if we put it just in this place, you will be very near to me."

Willie brought it, and was soon seated at the feet of Mrs. Fortescue, looking up into her face with a bright look, expressive of the most perfect contentment.

"Now, this is what I call snug," said Lily, as she pressed more closely to her mother's side. "What a curious morning this has been for Mary and me! We did not think, when we were saying our geography this morning, that we should leave off so quickly, and have such a holiday, did we, Mary?"

"No," said Mary; "and it is such a day, too, for a holiday. It would not have been half so nice if the sun had not been shining as it is. Everything is so bright and beautiful, and I am so happy!" And throwing aside her hat as she spoke, the little girl laid her head upon her mother's shoulder.

Truly, everything *was* bright and beautiful on that fair summer morning, and few things more so than the thickly shaded arbour in which the party were seated; and so numbers of little birds seemed to think, for rich thrilling songs were ever and anon heard from amid the thick clusters of ivy, jasmine, and sweet-scented clematis, which completely covered it. One little blackbird had

taken possession of a climbing rose-tree, and was pouring a perfect flood of rapturous melody upon the listening ears below.

"Mamma," said Lily, eagerly, "that must be a nightingale! Does it not sing like one?"

"It has sweet notes, my love, but it cannot be a nightingale; they are never seen so far north as this, much less are they heard. I think that is a blackbird. Ah, yes," continued Mrs. Fortescue, as she looked up to the roof of the summer-house; "I see the little fellow; he is on a slender twig, which is bent and swinging to and fro beneath his weight."

"Annie," said Willie, "don't you wish we had such a summer-house as this in our garden, and all covered with roses and ivy as this is? I would very often be in it; wouldn't you?"

"Yes, I should like it very well," said Annie, "on a fine morning like this; but would it not be a long time before it was all covered with creeping plants as yours is?" continued she, addressing Mrs. Fortescue.

"Not very long; ivy is rather long in growing to such a height and thickness as you see it here; but the clematis that is twined amongst it is a quick-growing plant, and so is honey-suckle; roses, too, may be procured in abundance. When I was your age, Annie," added Mrs. Fortescue, smiling, "I could not have been content to live in the country, and not have a summer-house; and, what is more, I not only had summer-houses, but I made them myself."

"Did you?" exclaimed both Annie and Willie in the same breath.

"Yes," said Mrs. Fortescue. "I do not mean,"

she continued, "that I sawed or chopped the wood for the posts, and drove them into the ground without assistance. In this hard part of the work I had the help of a carpenter; but I superintended the whole, and took an active part in the work. I shall never forget the pleasure which this employment gave to me: my journeys to the woods in the early spring mornings, when, with no other attendant than a little servant boy, it was my delight to collect bundles of the long, thin, nut branches, as soon as they contained sufficient sap to be easily bent; and then, when the frame-work was completed by the interweaving of these long, flexible branches,—all which I performed myself, —the long, happy hours spent in searching for roots of woodbine, ivy, and other plants, that the whole might be covered as speedily as possible. What a measure of joyous health and strength for after years I laid up then!"

"I want to ask something," said Annie, after a little pause, during which she had been attentively examining Mrs. Fortescue's face.

"Well, my dear, what is it?" said Mrs. Fortescue, kindly.

"Was your father rich, ma'am?" said Annie hesitatingly, and colouring as she spoke.

"Yes, my dear, he was very rich; and Hawthorne Priory, which was the name of our country home, was a large and beautiful place."

"Really!" said Annie, with a look of surprise; "then, if you were rich, did you come to live here when you came back from India, because you liked best to live in a cottage in the country?"

"Partly for that reason," said Mrs. Fortescue, "and partly for another. From the time my

precious children could run alone, it has been my earnest endeavour to teach them, as my dear mother taught me, to 'learn to love all simple things;' and I believe, as did my dear husband, that a country life, at least during the period of childhood, is the best for this purpose."

Annie listened to this answer with a puzzled look, as if she were quite at a loss what to make of Mrs. Fortescue. After a few moments' silence Willie said, "But, if you collected sticks for your summer-house, it could not be like this one."

"No, this is made of laths; I will tell you how I made mine, my boy. I first marked out upon the ground a true circle, of the proper size for my arbour; then, a number of upright posts, all of the same length, were procured and driven into the ground at equal distances. This, as I have told you, was done *for* me, and so was the nailing of some strong laths from post to post, previous to the putting on of the roof. The roof was pointed, a number of shorter and more slender posts being nailed to the uprights, and then, by means of a hole bored in each, firmly tied together in the centre at the top. This done, all the rest was my own work, and much I enjoyed it. It only remained to fill up the spaces between the posts by weaving in the osiers, or flexile twigs, of which I have already spoken, and which were to be found in the neighbouring woods and plantations. The roof-raising," continued Mrs. Fortescue, laughing, "caused much amusement. An unlucky post would sometimes escape from confinement and swing from side to side, to the imminent peril of the heads and shoulders beneath; but the twining-in of the nut-branches is quite easy, and

was soon done. If the posts are placed rather wide apart, it is best to put a strong upright shoot between each two, as it makes the work stronger and more regular; and the same with the posts at the top. If the twining is closely and equally done throughout the whole structure, the whole has a very neat and pretty effect; it is just like basket-work."

"Well! I think I could help to twine," said Willie; "I'll ask papa about it, I'm determined! But, O dear! it will be no use until the holidays if I'm to go to school soon," added the little boy, disconsolately.

"To school!" exclaimed Annie, eagerly, looking at Mrs. Fortescue for an explanation; "has Willie to go to school, ma'am?"

The twins looked at their mother in great surprise, as she answered:

"Yes, Annie, it is probable that he will after a while, but it may be some time before everything is settled; and I hope that while your brother remains at home, you will both do your utmost to make each other happy."

Annie looked down and blushed, but she made no reply, and a short silence ensued; after which Mrs. Fortescue rose and left the arbour, and the children followed her into the house.

When, late in the evening, Annie Wood and her brother left Rose Cottage, the twins seated themselves on little stools at the feet of their mother, and eagerly talked of their guests. Many questions were asked about Willie and his going to school. Both the children declared that he was a very nice little boy, and that they liked him a great deal better than they did Annie.

"I don't think, mamma," said Lily, "that Annie was at all sorry when you said that Willie had to go to school."

"Sorry! no," said Mary; "I believe that in her heart she was rather glad! I do indeed, mamma!" she repeated, her colour rising as she spoke. "Did you see, Lily, how she went on walking up and down the walks, keeping hold of our arms, and never speaking to poor Willie?"

"Yes," said Lily, "I did; and when we wanted to go to him, and play with him, Annie always said, 'Oh, leave the boy alone! he is happy enough with the swing and the other playthings;' and once she said, 'For goodness sake leave the child alone!' and you know, mamma, poor Willie

could not like to be left all alone for a long time. She is not a nice girl, and she is not kind to Willie; she is not sorry when he is sorry, and glad when he is glad, as Mary and I are about each other. Poor Willie! I am very sorry for him!"

"Mamma," said Mary, "I was glad when you told Annie not to speak to Willie about what he had done to his mamma, for before you came into the garden she spoke about it in a whisper to us, but Willie heard what she said—I know he did from his look; and whenever he said anything, Annie looked in a sort of way as if she were angry with him for speaking at all."

"My children," said Mrs. Fortescue, when the little girls had ceased to speak, and had contentedly laid their little faces on her lap, "I am glad that you see the unamiable character of Annie's disposition, for I trust that this will lead you to guard against similar faults in your own. But perhaps Annie has not been so often reminded as you have been, that at all times God sees her; that every word she utters He hears; and that every thought of her heart is known to Him. If she be selfish, and unkind, and unamiable, it is because she does not beg of God to make her good; and perhaps may never have been taught to pray to Him, or to try to please Him."

There was silence for a few moments, and then Mary said: "Mamma, we are sorry for poor Annie, and we will always be kind to her, will we not, Lily?"

"Yes," said Lily, "but I am much *more* sorry for Willie. But, mamma," she quickly added, "why does Annie's mother send her to school? Why does she not teach her herself at home?"

"I suppose Mrs. Browne thinks that Annie will learn more at school."

"Well!" said Mary, "Annie is more clever than we are, Lily. She can play upon the pianoforte, and she knows French; and you know she told us that she could write quite fast and small, like mamma."

"Yes, Mary, but you know she is much older," replied Lily; "she is nearly twelve years old. I dare say, if we try hard, we shall know as much as she does when we are twelve. You will never send us to school, will you, mamma? You won't send your little girls away, will you?" she continued, climbing on to her mother's knee, and kissing her.

"Say you never will, mamma," said Mary, anxiously.

"Never, my dear children," said their mother. "So long as God shall continue to me the means and the opportunity of teaching you myself, I will keep you under my own care."

"Mamma," said Mary, "we will be very good, and mind all you say to us; indeed we will. You are a good, sweet mamma, and we love you so much. And, mamma, we know God gave you to us, and we thank Him, and love Him for it, don't we, Lily? Every night, before we go to sleep, we whisper quite low, 'O God, we thank Thee for giving us our good mamma; don't take her away too! Let her stay with us always!'"

CHAPTER V.

Two mornings after the visit mentioned in the last chapter, Mrs. Fortescue sate alone in the breakfast-room, busily engaged in writing letters to some of her friends respecting a school for poor Willie. She was not this morning likely to be interrupted by visitors; for with the exception of the Brownes, she had no acquaintances in the village excepting the Rector and his wife; and they had left home on the previous Monday, and

were not to return until the evening of the following Saturday.

Whatever Mrs. Fortescue undertook, she accomplished to the best of her power; and in the welfare of little Willie she took a peculiar interest; more especially, as she had taken upon herself, in his case, a large amount of responsibility.

The twins had been told by their mother that their lessons would be given them in the afternoon; and that until half-past twelve, they might play in the garden, or in the play-room. The information gave them much satisfaction; though, as Lily observed, "It was not like a holiday, as the afternoon would come."

The morning was lovely; the soft summer air was fragrant with the scent of flowers; and the children were very happy. The dolls had been taken into favour again; and after the rabbits had been looked at for a little while, Mary suggested that they should give the dolls lessons, and be like their mamma. The proposal was quickly agreed to by Lily; and with a slow and somewhat stately step, the little girls walked into the summer-house which was on this occasion to serve for a school-room. Mary then remembered that books would be necessary; and quickly running into the house, returned with her pinafore full of little school-books, suitable for all ages, and embracing, as governesses say, the usual branches of a sound English education. After the dolls had been carefully placed in very proper attitudes, the course of instruction commenced very vigorously; and a bystander would have been considerably amused by the grave looks of the children during this occupation, and by the various interruptions

in the school-room routine, occasioned by the imaginary naughtiness and stupidity of the doll-pupils. Exactly as the clock struck twelve, the twins, imitating their mother's punctuality, hastily dressed the dolls in tippets and bonnets; and running into the garden, placed them side by side in the thick box-edging of a flower-bed. They then ran away to seek some relaxation for themselves after the fatiguing duties of the morning. Having a great desire "*for once*," as they said, to see what was going on in the village, they ran down to the bottom of the large kitchen garden. The wall which divided the garden from the road was not a high one; but it was too high for the children to look over, without assistance. With some difficulty they made a little pile of the slates which had before attracted Lily's notice; and Mary standing upon it, contrived to hold up her sister safely, while, with the help of some slight projecting stones, she climbed to the top of the wall. Nothing was to be seen in the lane except a few cottages which bordered it, and some dirty little boys and girls, who were playing clamorously at marbles; but Lily, who had seldom heard any of the conversation of this class of children, was amused by what she saw and heard. How long she would have stood there, it is difficult to say; but Mary, who had been patiently holding her up for some minutes, at length declared that her arms were aching so much that she could bear it no longer. Lily directly dropped upon her feet; and after first looking round to see that no one was within sight, she said, "Now Mary, dear, it is your turn you know. I will hold you up; so make haste; it is nearly half-past twelve!"

"But what is there to see that is nice?" said Mary.

"Oh I don't know," replied Lily. "Some funny little children! and there may be more things going on now."

"But what *would* mamma say, if she knew?" said Mary.

"Oh, she could not be very angry; we never looked over before! But you must be quick if I am to hold you up."

The temptation was too great to be resisted; and with considerable misgivings Mary allowed herself to be lifted up by Lily.

There *was* more to see. Mr. Browne's open carriage was driving quickly up the lane. The father, mother, and both the children were in it.

"Oh, Lily! there is Mr. Browne's carriage coming! Perhaps they will tell mamma that we are here; I must get down." And Mary gave one quick glance at the carriage-party as she spoke. "No, I cannot," she continued, "they see me; and there is that dreadful Annie waving her handkerchief. Oh dear! Hold me tight, Lily; what shall I do?"

In another moment, the carriage stopped under the wall.

"Well! little bird!" said Mrs. Browne, with a hearty laugh, while in evident surprise, her husband looked at Mary; "so you have escaped from your cage, have you? upon my word, you are a clever child! and where is Lily?"

"She is here," said the little girl, blushing up to the roots of her hair; "she is close by me. We held each other up for once just to see over the wall; but mamma does not know, she would

be angry if she did; for she has forbidden us to come down here without leave."

As she spoke, a number of the villagers, whose attention had been attracted by the stopping of the carriage, were standing at their doors listening to the silvery tones of Mary's childish voice, as with some difficulty she was maintained in her elevated position by Lily.

"Is that one of the little Miss Fortescues?" said one young woman, the mother of several children. "What on earth can her mother be thinking of, to let her look over this wall? She'll learn no good, I'm sure!"

"Ten to one, Mrs. Fortescue knows nothing of her being there," said a neighbour. "She ought to know though."

"Little lady," said Mr. Browne, "take my advice; run in now and tell your mother that you have been here; and let this be your first and last act of disobedience."

"I will," said the child, the tears rolling fast down her cheeks as she spoke.

"Stay a minute, my dear," said Mrs. Browne, and this time she spoke in a tender, pitying tone; "I meant to send your mamma a note to invite you and Lily to take tea with us this evening; but as we have seen you, perhaps you will be the messenger?"

Mr. Browne here whispered hurriedly to his wife. "I can't," said she in a low tone. "This is the only night this week; and next Monday you know we go from home. If she won't let them come, I can't help it; but surely they will be punished in some other way. Tell your mother, my child," continued Mrs. Browne, "that I hope

she will allow you both to come to us this evening; as we leave home for a short time in a few days."

"Good-bye, Mary," called out Willie, as the carriage drove on; "be sure you tell!"

"Good-bye," answered the child sadly; and then jumped quickly down and looked at Lily. In silent dismay, the twins seated themselves side by side upon the slates. No explanation was needed by Lily; she had heard all that had passed.

"What must we do now?" said she. "Oh, Mary! if you only had not seen the Brownes, it would all have been right! What a pity it is that they came just then, is it not?"

"I don't know," said Mary. "You see, Lily, we might have come here to-morrow, and the next day, and the day after that, if nothing had come of it; and done, besides, many other wrong things. Nurse says, you know, that people always begin with doing little wrong things, and then go on getting worse every day, unless God stops them."

"I should not have cared so very much about mamma's knowing; though, to be sure, it will be dreadful telling her! But, you see, Mary, the party. What will be done about that? and it would be so nice to go. We should fly Willie's new kite, and see the pigeons; and I am quite sure in my own mind, that if we tell mamma about this first, she will not let us go."

"But still we must tell her," said Mary. "Besides, you know, I told Mr. Browne that I would. Hark! Lily, there is the dressing-bell! Let us run in at once, and get it over;" and taking each other's hand, the children returned to the flower-garden, hastily collected their dolls and books,

and entered the house with very different feelings from those with which they had left it in the morning.

But Mrs. Fortescue was nowhere to be found. In the drawing, dining, and breakfast-room, up stairs, everywhere, they sought her, but in vain. At length a servant appeared, and told the children that their mother had gone out into the village to see a sick woman.

"Will mamma be home to dinner?" said Lily.

"Oh yes, Miss," replied the servant; "but it is not yet half-past twelve."

"We thought we heard the dressing-bell," said Mary.

"No, my dear, it would be the front door bell that you heard. A note has just been brought from Mrs. Browne, for your mamma; but the man did not wait for an answer; he said he would call again."

The children looked anxiously at each other on receiving this information. Slowly they entered the drawing-room, and seated themselves by the window, to watch for their mother's return. The minutes seemed hours, and the brief respite had weakened Lily's determination to tell her mother of what they had done. Mary was as firm as ever in her resolution upon the subject; but every moment she felt that it was becoming more and more difficult to abide by it.

"What can that note be about?" said Lily, after a silence of some minutes' duration; "I wish Mrs. Browne would not send notes here!"

"Why should you wish that, Lily?"

"Why, don't you see that there may be something about *us* in this note?"

"Yes," said Mary; "but we will not think of that, Lily. We will run out directly the front door opens, and tell it all out. Will not that be the best plan?"

Lily assented, though not very willingly; and just then, Mrs. Fortescue appeared in a turn of the grounds.

Mary's heart beat violently; and a little anxious flush spread over her cheek. The child loved her mother so dearly, that her timid, nervous nature shrank as much from the idea of giving her pain, as from the expectation of punishment. Notwithstanding her proposal to run out as soon as they heard the hall door open, both the children sat quite still, their little feet scarcely touching the floor, until the drawing-room door was opened by their mother.

"Well, my children!" she began eagerly; then instantly perceiving by their countenances that something was wrong, she stopped short, and seating herself upon the sofa, looked inquiringly, and rather anxiously at the little girls.

Mary suppressed, with some difficulty, a rising sob, and ran up to her mother, followed by Lily.

The whole was then told; and chiefly by Mary, who spoke quickly, and without looking in her mother's face.

Mrs. Fortescue's penetrating eye marked the effort with which this confession was made; and her heart throbbed with thankfulness to the Giver of all good, for having thus early blessed her efforts to instil into the minds of both her children, a love and habit of truthfulness; and that in her little Mary, in whose peculiar temperament the temptation to concealment was very strong, He

was graciously giving such a measure of his grace as to lead her to be the first voluntarily to confess a fault, and to speak the truth.

When Mary and Lily had ceased to speak, Mrs. Fortescue thought for a few minutes before she answered. Then she said,

"I am very sorry to hear this; but I am glad that you have come and told me the whole truth. I trust, whether Mr. Browne had advised you to do so or not, that it would not have been left undone. I do hope that neither of you would have felt easy, much less happy, until this serious fault had been confessed, and until you had asked forgiveness for it. Sorry as I am to hear of your disobedience, I should have been much more sorry if you had also shown a want of truth and honesty. I say again, I am glad, thankful, to have this instance of your truth. But you have been disobedient. You knew, that without special leave, you had been expressly forbidden to go into the lower garden; and when you went down to the wall, and looked over it, you knew perfectly well that you were doing what I should decidedly disapprove; and that in displeasing me, you were also displeasing your Father which is in heaven; for God has said, 'Children, obey your parents.' Go into the nursery. I will send your dinner to you. Your going to Mrs. Browne's to tea is out of the question: and I shall send you both to bed an hour earlier to-night. Now go; and ask nurse to be so good as to come and speak to me."

Mrs. Fortescue's heart yearned towards her children, as they silently, and with tearful faces, left the room. Mary cast one imploring look towards her mother as she followed Lily. Little

did the child read in the calm, firm expression which met her beseeching look, the conflict of the mother's heart.

When the nurse appeared, Mrs. Fortescue told her what had happened, and said that she would send for the children when she was ready to begin their lessons. On going into her dressing-room, the first object which met her eye, was Mrs. Browne's note. It was as follows:—

"Dear Madam,—My husband was so charmed this morning by the ingenuous conduct of one of your caged birds, (pardon my levity,) that (not doubting himself, of its having told you of our having accidentally discovered the somewhat public place of its retreat after an escape from the cage) he has commissioned me to intercede with you on behalf of the sweet little culprit, and to beg that you will allow both your children to come to us this evening.

"Yours, very truly,
"Henrietta Browne."

To this note, Mrs. Fortescue immediately returned the following answer:—

"Dear Madam,—Sorry as I am to refuse your kind invitation to my little girls, and thus to cause them considerable disappointment, I am sure you will, upon reflection, agree with me, that an act of wilful disobedience, whatever may be its consequences, or however it may be followed by an ingenuous confession, ought not to be passed over.

"The pleasure of a visit to you this evening,

would considerably weaken, if not entirely destroy, the good effects of any other punishment.

"With my sincere thanks for your own and Mr. Browne's kindness in the matter,

"Believe me, dear Mrs. Browne,

"Yours very truly,

"MARY RACHEL FORTESCUE."

Mrs. Fortescue allowed more than an hour to elapse after dinner before she sent for the twins. It was her wish that they should have time to regain their usual tranquillity of mind and temper before they began their lessons; especially as the first lesson in French was to be given that day.

When, however, the children appeared, their mother saw that they were anything but tranquil. Lily had evidently been crying; but on Mary's face, there was the old sullen expression which it often wore; and which was immediately observed by Mrs. Fortescue.

For a little time, however, matters went on very smoothly. Mrs. Fortescue told the children which of the usual lessons must be left out for want of time. The first French lesson should, she said, be given the next day, if they would rather not have it then.

"I do not mind, Mamma;" said Lily; "do you, Mary?"

But Mary did not speak; and Mrs. Fortescue, without taking any notice of her manner, quietly opened a book of easy French phrases; and selecting for a beginning, the first six, she directed the children to read, each one in turn, after her. After some time had been spent in patient repetition by their mother, this was fairly done by

them; and then Mrs. Fortescue marked the piece to be learnt by rote in the evening.

"I am sure I shall forget it all by the evening," said Lily.

"And so shall I," said Mary, sullenly.

"If you cannot remember it again, you may come to me for help; but I think that if you try your very best, you can," said Mrs. Fortescue; and as she spoke, she opened a book of French verbs; and after a few simple remarks in explanation, the children began with her a small portion of the verb *avoir*. Their mother made them speak after her in the same way as they had done in the phrases; and the little girls got on more smoothly than before. But in the preterite tense of the indicative mood, Mary three times successively, pronounced the third person singular like the English word *you;* appearing quite unable to master the French pronunciation. Several times, her mother patiently corrected this error; at last she was convinced that the little girl was persisting in it purposely.

"Mary," said her mother earnestly, "I fear you are obstinate; I believe you can pronounce this word perfectly well."

Mary remained silent; and to all appearance, quite unmoved.

"Tell me what you think it is," said Mrs. Fortescue; "speak, my dear."

There was a few moments' pause, during which Mary remained motionless, with her eyes fixed upon the ground.

"Speak," whispered Lily, hurriedly; "oh, speak, Mary!"

Again her mother slowly repeated the word;

and then she said, "Now, Mary, tell me what it is. If you do not, I must punish you."

But no; Mary was resolute, though the colour flew to her face, as her mother spoke; and Mrs. Fortescue being now quite convinced of the state of the case, laid the book upon the table, and told Mary that she did not think she should, at present, continue to give her French lessons, and that she must remain in that room until she gave her permission to leave it. "You, Lily," continued Mrs. Fortescue, "may put your books into their places, and amuse yourself as you please until tea-time."

But Lily had taken a leaf out of Mary's book; and when her mother had ceased to speak, she burst into a loud cry.

"Mamma!" exclaimed Mary, whose distress of mind was now very evident; "I will speak! Hear me, mamma!" and grasping her mother's arm, she looked up in her face, repeating the word correctly.

"It is too late, Mary," said Mrs. Fortescue, in a firm but sorrowful tone; "and you, Lily," she added, "must be quiet instantly, or I shall punish you too."

"I won't be quiet!" said Lily, passionately. "How can I play without Mary! Mamma, let her come! Do let her come!"

"Leave the room!" said Mrs. Fortescue. Lily obeyed; but the next instant her mother heard the sound of some one sobbing outside; and looking round, she saw Lily in front of the window, holding back the clustering plants to make room for her face, and watching with tearful eyes what was going on within.

A slight wave of her mother's hand was sufficient to make her leave the window, and go out of sight. Then Mrs. Fortescue approached Mary, who, lying on the sofa, with her face buried in the cushions, was now weeping bitterly.

"Mary," said her mother, "look at me."

The child raised her dark eyes, which were swimming with tears, and gave one quick glance at her mother, then hid her face again.

"You have grieved me much;" continued Mrs. Fortescue. "You do not know how much. Stay here until I return. I trust that I shall never see you so obstinate and naughty again."

With these words, Mrs. Fortescue left Mary, and going up to her dressing-room, she rang the bell, and desired that Lily might be sent to her.

In a few moments little feet were heard coming along the passage; and Lily entered.

"Come here," said her mother, as the child paused with a doubtful look at the door. "Why have you your hat and cape on? Where are you going?"

"I have to go out with nurse," said Lily; "I said I did not want to go without Mary; but—"

"I hope you have not been naughty," said Mrs. Fortescue.

"No," said the child; "but I am so sorry for Mary. May she come out now, Mamma?"

"No, my dear; and, Lily, I want to talk to you a little;" and sitting down, Mrs. Fortescue took off the little girl's walking dress, and placed her upon her lap.

"You were very naughty, Lily, to exclaim as

you did when I punished Mary. I was grieved to see you so passionate; I thought my little girl was daily becoming more gentle and patient; but to-day she told me that she would *not* be quiet at my desire. Do you remember saying that, Lily?"

"I do now;" said the child, blushing deeply. "But I had forgotten; I did not think of what I said."

"No, my child; when people are carried away by passion, they never *do* think of what they either say or do; and therefore they do and say many wrong things. You see this in your own case. If you had not lost all command of yourself, you would not have cried in that violent manner; nor would you have refused to obey me. Let this be a lesson to you, Lily, to be more watchful over your passionate temper. You must ask God to help you; you must have his Spirit in your little heart, if you are to grow up a good girl, and a comfort to me. If you grow up wilful and passionate, Lily, you will not be God's child; and you will make your mamma very unhappy."

The child hung her head as these last words were uttered, and burst into tears.

"Mary was very naughty," continued her mother; "do you not think she was?"

"Yes," murmured Lily, after a few moments' silence.

"She knew the word," said Mrs. Fortescue; "but she allowed herself to get into that naughty temper; and therefore would not say it. If I were to let her grow up passionate and disobedient, she would be miserable while she lived; and if she died, with those tempers unsubdued,

God would not take her to be happy with Him in Heaven. My child, neither of you can understand now, the necessity for what you may think my great strictness: you may think your mother is sometimes severe, Lily; but if you and Mary are spared to grow up into womanhood, you will thank me for all; and your love will not be lessened, but increased, by the thought that I had trained you, when young, in the narrow path which leadeth unto Life."

"I know, Mamma!" said the child earnestly, as she clasped her little arms round her mother's neck, "you punish us to make us good; and you were sorry too. I saw a tear in your eye; I know I did. Dear Mamma! we know you love us all the time; and we will always love you; always!"

"It is because I love you so dearly, Lily, that I punish you now. If I did not take notice of what you do that is wrong, it would be because I did not love you enough to care how you grew up. Sorry as I am to give you pain, or to deprive you of a pleasure, I must not suffer you to grow up disobedient and naughty: that would be selfishness, not love. Now, my little girl," continued Mrs. Fortescue, as she tenderly kissed her little daughter, "go to nurse; and when you return from your walk, you shall, if Mary is good, play with her again. But remember that your lessons are to be learned earlier this evening, as you go to bed soon."

It wanted half an hour to tea-time when Mrs. Fortescue entered the drawing-room where she had left Mary. Lily had returned from her walk; but had, without a word of remonstrance,

remained quietly in the nursery, until summoned by her mother.

Mary was lying fast asleep upon the sofa. The unfortunate French grammar had fallen upon the carpet beside her. Her soft brown hair, which had become wet with her tears, half hid her face. The child had evidently not lain there during the whole time that she was alone; for she held in one hand a white rose, which was still wet from a recent shower, and which had doubtless been plucked from the open window.

Her mother's entrance did not arouse her; nor did her soft kiss upon the gentle face, now so touching in its expression of simple humility and sorrow, cause her to move.

For some moments, Mrs. Fortescue watched her with anxious interest, just as she did on the first morning of her return home. For the first time, it occurred to her mind that the child did not look so well as usual; she thought that her face was thinner than it used to be; and that there was an expression of languor in the extreme quietness of the features. There was, however, no time for more than a passing thought upon the subject; for just as she was giving Mary another kiss, the little girl awoke.

"Oh, Mamma!" she exclaimed, "Is that you? How long have you been here?"

"Not long, my child," said Mrs. Fortescue, as she tenderly put back the disordered hair from the little girl's brow.

"I don't think I am quite awake yet," said Mary. "Have I been sleeping long, Mamma?" continued she, as she rubbed her eyes, and cast a very bewildered look round the room.

"You have been in this room an hour and a half my dear; but I do not know how long you have slept."

"Oh, I remember it all now!" exclaimed the child, colouring deeply. "Mamma," said she starting up, and throwing her arms round her mother's neck. "I am so sorry. Kiss me, Mamma!"

With a beating heart Mrs. Fortescue pressed the little girl in her arms, and kissed her again and again.

"I know you are sorry, my precious child," said she. "Now come with me, and I will wash your face and hands, and brush your hair; and you and Lily shall have an hour's play, before you begin your lessons."

CHAPTER VI.

"MAMMA!" exclaimed the twins, as early one fine morning in July, they ran into the breakfast-room, "what do you think has happened? Just guess."

"I cannot tell, indeed, my dears," said their mother smiling. "What is it?"

"There are some young rabbits born!" exclaimed the children; "actually young rabbits!

Grey, black, and white; and such a number of them! Will you not come and see them before breakfast?"

"Surely I will," said Mrs. Fortescue; "I should like very much to see them."

The children ran on eagerly before their mother, and had the door of the rabbit-hutch open before she reached them.

"How well and plump they all look!" said Mrs. Fortescue; "but I do not see the young ones, Lily."

"No, Mamma;" said Lily, "and I am afraid you can't see them, unless we can get the mother out of the way. They are all in that box, you know; Mary and I did manage to get hold of her; but she was so angry that Mary says—"

"Why, I thought," interrupted Mrs. Fortescue, laughing, "you brought me down on purpose to see them. If they are not visible, I had better go back and make the tea."

"No, no, Mamma, you must not go," said Mary. "Come, Lily, let us try again!" I thought the old one might be out of her own accord by this time; but it seems now as if she never meant to come out again."

"Wait an instant, my dear," said her mother; then turning to the gardener, who was passing at the moment, she asked him to take hold of the old rabbit, while the children brought out the new litter to show to her. The man did so, and stood by with a good natured smile upon his countenance while the twins were displaying their sleek, tiny treasures to their mother.

"You take an interest in rabbit-keeping, Wilson," said Mrs. Fortescue, as he helped the chil-

dren to replace the young rabbits in the box; "I often see you tending them."

"Why, Ma'am, anything that pleases the young ladies has an interest for me," said the gardener, respectfully touching his hat as he spoke.

"You are very good," said Mrs. Fortescue, smiling; "but what is the matter with that white rabbit in the corner?" continued she, "Is it ill?"

"No, Ma'am; but it is a favourite, and it is too much handled," said the gardener, looking at the children.

"My dears," said their mother, "perhaps you do not know that rabbits should not be much handled. How do you lift them? Let me see you take one in your hands, Lily."

The child crept into the hutch, and secured a large grey one; holding it by the ears with one hand, and placing the other under it.

"Yes, that is the right way," said her mother; "and you always hold them so, do you?"

"No, Mamma," said Lily; "for we did not know until the gardener told us this morning that this was the way to hold them; but we did not often have them in our hands before; at first, we could hardly ever catch them."

"It is very well that you could not," said Mrs. Fortescue, laughing; "for if you had often handled the rabbits after your own fashion, you would have injured them. You may take hold of those young ones as you would a little chicken; they have hardly any ears to hold by; but larger rabbits should always be taken by the ears, and that not often. I see there is a good supply of food in the hutch. I dare say the gardener has told you that the mother of those little things,

will just now require a double quantity of food. Put down that rabbit, Lily, it wants some breakfast; and after we have had our own, I will give you a few tea-leaves to take to your pets. Rabbits are very fond of tea-leaves; but they should not have them often."

"They are all so tame now, Mamma," said Mary, as she and Lily followed their mother into the house. "This morning, we put our heads down upon the ground, and two or three of them climbed upon our hats! It was so funny," continued the child, "to feel their little paws creeping about our heads!"

It was the twins' birthday. They were eight years old this day; and sweet children they were. A daily improvement, manifest in their disposition and temper, and in their manners and habits, proved the rich promise of their infant years to be already in progress of fulfilment. "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee," said Mrs. Fortescue to herself, as with a heart full of thankfulness she looked at her children.

Some changes had taken place during the last month. Annie Wood had left her home on a visit to a school-friend; and Mrs. Fortescue, aided by her friends, had succeeded in establishing Willie in a really excellent school which had lately become known to her. The little boy had now been there a week; and previously to his leaving home, a long day had been spent by Mrs. Fortescue and her children at Mr. Browne's; and he, with his wife and children, had more than once visited Mrs. Fortescue.

Many and frequent were the resolutions and assurances of good conduct which Willie made to

Mrs. Fortescue before he left home: and very judiciously and sweetly did she encourage and advise him, regarding his future career. On this morning, she was rather anxious for the arrival of the post, for she expected a letter from him. When breakfast was over, the children read with their mother for an hour; and then Mrs. Fortescue proposed a walk before the heat of the day should come on. The children joyfully consented. Few things delighted them more than a walk with their mother.

Mrs. Fortescue led them through a thick wood, which, for some distance, skirted the banks of the Eden. Those who have been accustomed to ramble along a path thickly shaded by trees in the full richness of their summer foliage, can recal to memory the song of birds, the hum of insects, the indescribable mingling of rural sounds, which renders such rambles delightful.

Long did the twins wander with their mother on this fair birthday morning. Trained, as they had been from their earliest infancy, to recognize in external nature the wonderful handiwork and loving providence of God, this walk was not to them a stroll without object, pleasure, or interest. The little Fortescues had been early taught to "look from nature up to nature's God."

Lily's discoveries in the way of bird's nests and butterflies were many in number; and her constant pursuit after one or the other, joined to her rapid questions and remarks, kept her mother's attention fully awake. Mary contented herself with collecting a large bouquet of wild roses, and other flowers which embellished their path; and with her little basket, and one hand laden with

flowers, she joined her mother and sister, who had seated themselves under a spreading beech-tree.

"Oh, Mary!" exclaimed Lily, "what flowers you have! You will give me some, will you not? I have not had time to pluck any."

"Yes," said Mary, laughing, "I will give you some; but I do not know why you have not had as much time to pluck them as I."

"Oh, I have been climbing about, in all kinds of scrambling places! I believe, mamma was afraid that I should fall into the river," said Lily, kissing her mother, as she spoke.

"Rather, sometimes, I must confess," said Mrs. Fortescue; "but you have been so very obedient, that I have always been able to keep you in sight. Now let us divide these beautiful flowers into three separate bunches. What a variety you have gathered, my little Mary, and what a number!" she continued, as she drew the little girl towards her, and looked into her basket. "We can scarcely hold them in our hands I fear."

"Mamma," said Mary, "they are not all for nosegays; I thought you would, perhaps, help Lily and me to make a garland for each of us, as it is our birthday. You know, you made us each one last year, when we were seven."

"Yes, my child," said Mrs. Fortescue, sighing as she remembered the changes which had taken place since then. "I will do it with pleasure; and my children shall be crowned queens of the day, each with a more beautiful wreath than could be formed of the richest diamonds." She distributed the flowers as she spoke, and the children were soon busily engaged in twining them into garlands.

"Now, dear Mamma," said Mary, "we just want one thing to make us quite happy; just one song. Please sing us something!"

"Oh do, Mamma! if you are rested," said Lily, with a very pleading look.

After a few moments' silence, Mrs. Fortescue began the sweet song called, "The Better Land." Every one is acquainted with these lines, so touching in their beautiful simplicity, and in their exulting expressions of faith and hope.

The twins listened, motionless with delight. They had forgotten their employment, and their flowers lay upon the ground beside them. For a few moments after the song was finished, no one spoke. Mrs. Fortescue's thoughts had wandered far away, to that land the beauty of which "dreams cannot picture."

When they recommenced their work, they made quick progress. Mrs. Fortescue, who, in her younger days, had woven many a summer garland, was very expert; and very soon the children were playing round her in great glee, with their hats in their hands, and their soft brown hair waving amidst a profusion of wild flowers. "Oh, that they may long retain their zest for innocent pleasures; their sweet simplicity of thought and feeling!" sighed their mother as she looked at them. "Now," said she, after a while, "we must go home; so let me take off these pretty garlands, and you can carry them in your hands, and wear them again when you reach home. It is nearly dinner time; we must make haste."

A letter from Willie was put into Mrs. Fortescue's hand when she entered the house. A long, simple, and affectionate one it was; giving many

particulars of school-regulations and duties, and describing many occurrences and scenes.

The concluding paragraph ran thus:—

"And now you will want to know whether I am happy; and whether I am trying to be a good boy? I *am* happy; but there is never a day when I do not think of you, and long to see you again. I do not know what would have become of me but for you. Many times since I came here, I have been almost in a passion; and every time but one, I checked myself. I mean, I tried hard myself, and God helped me. I very often think of all you said to me; and before I go home for the holidays, I hope God will have made me a better boy. I received a letter from mamma yesterday; and I wrote to her this morning. I have made a good friend since I came here. His name is Alfred Melville. Please write to me very soon. "Yours affectionately,

"WILLIE BROWNE."

With tears of grateful joy, Mrs. Fortescue rapidly perused this letter. She then repeated some parts of it to the little girls who stood by, anxious to hear tidings of Willie; and when that day she entered into her closet and shut her door, she neglected not to pour forth her thanksgivings to the Giver of all good, for having thus far blessed her efforts for little Willie's welfare.

That afternoon, according to custom on the birthday of the twins, a treat was to be given to the scholars of the village Sunday-school. Soon after three o'clock, a long table was spread in the meadow adjoining the grounds of Rose Cottage,

and an abundant supply of plum-cake, fruit, and other good things, awaited the arrival of the children. The little Fortescues were in a flutter of expectation, and were never tired of helping their mother and the servants in the necessary arrangements. Mary was very useful; but Lily had rather allowed her spirits to run away with her, and did, as the nurse told her, more harm than good.

Some playthings were to be distributed amongst the children after tea, and these were collected together in one place; Lily seized a skipping-rope, and began to show Mary how many times in succession she could skip, performing at the same time certain feats, such as crossing her arms, &c. Unobserved by either her mother or the nurse, who were standing at some little distance, superintending some of the preparations, she was going on making herself extremely warm, when the words "You had better not skip any more, Miss," caused her mother to look round. Desiring Lily, whose face seemed on fire, instantly to put away the skipping-rope, Mrs. Fortescue went up to her, and led her slowly about the field, telling her at the same time, that she had exerted herself much too violently, and must walk slowly about, in order to become gradually cool again.

"I knew it would make me hot," said the child; "but cook said I was such a beautiful skipper!"

"Mamma," said Mary, who was silently following her mother and Lily: "Look! Lily is not hot now. May we not go to the table again?"

"No, my dear," said Mrs. Fortescue; "I wish Lily to come into the house, and lie down for a

little while upon the sofa, that she may be quite rested before the children come."

"Oh, but need I, Mamma?" said Lily, pleadingly. "Look! I am quite cool now; indeed I am. Kiss me, and see," continued the little girl, holding up her face to be kissed.

"You are cooler than you were, my dear; still I wish you to come in-doors for a while. It still wants half-an-hour to four o'clock; and if Mary were to come in too, I think it would be better."

In consequence of this advice, both the children followed their mother into the drawing-room; and when Lily had passively allowed herself to be laid upon the sofa, Mrs. Fortescue took the opportunity to say a few well-timed words on the dangers which beset those who are easily influenced by undue praise.

After a short time, Mrs. Fortescue observed that the school children, headed by the good rector and his wife, were entering the meadow; and while the children resumed their hats and capes, she watched the arranging of the happy party; then after affectionately advising Lily not to run about much more, as she had already tired herself, and observing with pleasure that the child seemed completely refreshed, the mother went with the little girls into the meadow, and Mr. and Mrs. Somerville advanced to meet them. A party of about sixty young people, of ages varying from four to sixteen years, rose at the appearance of Mrs. Fortescue; and bows and curtsies followed each other in quick succession.

It was a pleasant sight to see those children on that afternoon; all so clean, and so evidently in a state of high enjoyment. Many of them were

the children of the poorest people in the village; children to whom such a holiday as this was "a white day" in their lives.

Mr. and Mrs. Somerville and Mrs. Fortescue walked along the path by the river; while amongst the concourse of village children, many a merry song and game went round, many a childish tale was told.

One very little girl of the age of four years fell down during a game of "follow-the-leader," which was taught them in a very spirited manner by Lily. As is not unusual with young children, the little girl screamed violently; but she was not at all hurt; and the twins were quickly by her side, and soon made her smile, and even laugh heartily in the midst of her tears.

Two or three hours were spent in hearty play, while Mrs. Fortescue walked near to the children with her friends. She talked with them earnestly of her own children; she told them of her fears and difficulties; and of her hopes and wishes respecting them. Much encouragement and benevolent counsel was given to her by the rector; and he spoke with great approbation of the conduct of the twins, and praised their simplicity and their gentleness of demeanour.

Mrs. Fortescue's heart throbbed with delight as she listened.

"You have already felt something of your recompense," continued Mr. Somerville. "Go on; the work which your heavenly Father has given you to do, He will help you to bring to good effect, if you put your trust in Him. A few more years, and it shall be yours to say, as you stand within the gates of the celestial city,—Here

am I, and the children which Thou hast given me."

The evening advanced; and as the sun was sinking below the horizon, and the atmosphere was about to become charged with dew, Mrs. Fortescue, assembling the children, distributed amongst them an abundant supply of strawberries; after which they all went into the house; and the children being placed in rows in the little entrance-hall, Mrs. Fortescue distributed prizes to such of them as had been favourably reported of to her by the rector. The head boy and girl received each a handsome Bible, with marginal references, and bound in morocco; while to the most deserving in the inferior classes, suitable, though less costly, gifts, were presented.

"If we all live," said Mrs. Fortescue, as with happy faces they returned thanks for her kindness, "I hope we shall meet again on this day next year; and may God bless you all, my dear children!"

There was silence for a few minutes, during which the young people were whispering to each other, and comparing their gifts. Then Mr. Somerville arose and said a few words.

"Children," said he, "I need not tell you how much you ought to thank Mrs. Fortescue. Strive to show your gratitude to Almighty God, to whom you owe the excellent friend you possess in this lady. You know it is from Him that 'all good things do come.' Study, then, to prove your thankfulness, by being diligent in your attendance at school; orderly in your conduct while there; attentive to instruction; and grateful to your teachers and friends. Thus will you please

not only your earthly friend and benefactor; but your Father which is in Heaven. Let each one of you pray for the help of God's Holy Spirit, (for without it, none of us can do anything), to enable you to become good children. May God Almighty bless you, and bring each one of you to a knowledge of Himself; so that we, who are labouring to train you for Heaven, may have the rich reward of seeing in his own good time, that the seed sown has yielded fruit; that our labour has not been in vain in the Lord."

The evening hymn was then sung, and shortly after, the hall was cleared. Mr. and Mrs. Somerville yielded to the entreaty of Mrs. Fortescue to remain with her some time longer.

It was late now; but it was a sweet evening; and they sate by one of the drawing-room windows, while the twins, apparently disinclined to talk, but in the most complete quiet enjoyment, placed themselves on little stools at their feet. Mary's soft head rested on Mrs. Somerville's lap, and Lily was in the same position by her mother.

"Has it been a happy birthday, Mary?" said Mrs. Somerville, as, with a fond caressing touch, she stroked the little girl's hair.

"Oh! so happy! Has it not, Lily? But now I feel as if I could just rest this way for a long time; it is another kind of happiness; but it is quite as happy. O! it has been such a nice birthday! I wish every day was a birthday, Mamma," continued the child.

"Because in that case, every day would be a holiday, I suppose you think," said her mother, smiling; "but you would soon become tired of holidays if you had them every day, my little

Mary. It is their not being very frequent, which causes them to be so much valued."

"Yes," said Lily, lifting her head as she spoke; "I believe we should become tired of play, if we had no lessons. When you were away, Mamma, that long time, we had nearly all day to play in; but we used to be tired often; were not we, Mary? And then we got into mischief; and nurse said it was because we had too much time to ourselves."

"Nurse thinks with Dr. Watts," said Mrs. Fortescue, looking at Mr. Somerville, that—

> "Satan finds some mischief still
> For idle hands to do."

"Those hymns," said the rector, looking up from a volume of beautiful engravings, "will be learned and loved while time lasts. How beautiful some of them are! How admirably adapted to the comprehension of a child!"

"Yes," said Mrs. Somerville, "and there are some by the same author, equally beautiful, suited, and calculated to give pleasure to the most cultivated mind. For instance, the one called 'A Summer Evening.' Do you know it, Mary?"

"Yes," said the child, colouring; "and so does Lily; she says it best."

"Will you each say it to me in turn?" said Mrs. Somerville, smiling; "repeat, each of you, four lines at a time."

"Begin, Mary," said her mother.

The child began directly, glancing with burning cheeks at the rector, who had laid down his book, and with a benevolent, encouraging smile was

listening. Mary was gently lifted on to his knee as she began,—

"How fine has the day been, how bright was the sun!
How lovely and joyful the course that he run,
Though he rose in a mist when his race he begun,
And there follow'd some droppings of rain!"

The next lines were quickly taken up by Lily, in clear, spirited tones—

"But now the fair traveller's come to the West,
His rays are all gold, and his beauties are best;
He paints the sky gay as he sinks to his rest,
And foretells a bright rising again."

"Finish it!" whispered Mary.

"No," said Mr. Somerville; "it is your turn now, my child."

Mary half hid her little face on his shoulder, as she continued,—

"Just such is the Christian: his course he begins
Like the sun in a mist, when he mourns for his sins,
And melts into tears; then he breaks out and shines;
And travels his heavenly way."

"Now Lily," said Mrs. Fortescue:—

"But when he comes nearer to finish his race,
Like a fine setting sun he looks richer in grace,
And gives a sure hope at the end of his days,
Of rising in brighter array."

"Thank you, my children," said Mr. Somerville, as, with a fond kiss upon her gentle face, he set Mary down upon the floor.

"Now it is time for you to go to bed," said their mother; and as she fondly kissed them, she said, "You have been dear, good children, and

have pleased me much. You have been happy, too, because you have been trying to make others happy. God bless you, and grant you, if it be His will, *many, many* happy returns of this day."

The twins then kissed Mrs. Somerville, and were affectionately pressed to her bosom as she wished them good night. Then they went up to the rector. He laid his hands fondly upon the little heads before him, and pressed an earnest kiss upon the fair brows.

"May God Almighty bless you, my children! May you be spared to see many happy birthdays, and for many a long year to be the solace and comfort of your dear mother; and thus, in some measure, to repay her for all her love and care for you now. You are the children of many prayers; of many ardent hopes. See that you disappoint them not! But as each succeeding year rolls over your young heads, may you, too, 'grow richer in grace;'

"'And give a sure hope, at the end of your days,
Of rising in brighter array.'"

CHAPTER VII.

The next two months witnessed considerable improvement in the twins. Mrs. Fortescue had been assiduous in her instructions, and her children had not been backward in profiting by her lessons. She had encouraged their exertions by promising them each a prize if they deserved it by their diligence. When the day fixed for the delivery of the prizes came, they were found both to have justly earned one. The hope of the prize had often increased their industry and perseve-

rance. But it was not merely for the prize that they laboured. A much higher motive for diligence and good conduct than the prospect of a prize, was constantly set before the children; and this was, to please their Father in heaven. To love and obey God was daily becoming more and more the aim of their lives; and their love and obedience to their mother, and their diligence and application, were but the necessary fruits of religious principle implanted in the heart.

Happy are the children who are thus educated; yea, *of* such, *blessed* is the man who has his quiver full.

Many conjectures were raised by the twins as to what their prizes would be. Lily wished for a fruit-knife, and Mary rather hoped for a work-box. They gathered no signs from their mother, so they were fain to wait patiently until the afternoon of the 1st, when an end would be put to their suspense.

On the morning of that day, which was a holiday, the rabbits were very carefully tended, and then the children proceeded to their own little gardens, which were now, owing to the kind care of the old gardener, gay with annuals and other flowers, though their first summer beauty had become faded. Wilson generally watched with some dismay Lily's commencement of gardening operations; for the little girl seldom visited her flower-beds without making some very startling and novel alterations in their shape and contents; sometimes taking up plants of a rare kind, and transplanting them into different borders; occasionally giving large batches of plants away to

Mary, and begging of the gardener others in their stead. These new designs, thus hastily formed, were not looked upon by the old man with much favour; and it was with some misgivings respecting their future welfare and prosperity, that he put the same number of plants into Lily's garden, as he did into Mary's, and gave the same assistance to both the children.

"What are you going to do with that?" said Lily, as he came towards them with a plant in his hand.

"It is a yellow rose-tree," said the gardener. "Mr. Browne has just sent your mamma a present of two of them; and I was desired to plant one of them in the rosary, just opposite the drawing-room windows."

"And where are you going to plant that one?" said Mary.

"I have to put it in one of your gardens, and my mistress said you were to decide betwixt you in whose it should be. I'll lay it down here," continued the old man, covering the root with mould, "and you can call me when you have settled it."

So saying, the gardener went away to his work, leaving the twins looking intently at the rose-tree with very grave faces.

"A yellow rose-tree!" exclaimed Lily, the very thing that you were wishing so much to have, Mary."

"Yes, but you would like one too, Lily," said Mary; "if Mr. Browne had only sent three, there would have been one for mamma, and one for each of us."

"Never mind, you must have it, Mary. You

would like it so much, and I really do not care much about it, I don't indeed!" But Lily gave a very wistful look at the tree as she spoke notwithstanding; and then ran off to bring the gardener to plant it.

"How kind of you," said Mary, with a little sigh, though her face coloured with pleasure, as the gardener began carefully to plant the rose-tree in the centre bed of her garden. "But, dear Lily, I am sorry you have not one too."

"Oh! I don't care; you know it has no scent, although it is pretty; I like moss-roses very nearly as much, and I have plenty of *them*."

The rose-tree was scarcely planted, when the dressing-bell rang, and the children took their tools and ran with them to the garden-house; and after they had put them into their places, they went into the house.

They were in a great state of expectation during dinner time; and too much occupied with the thought of their prizes to think of anything else. Mrs. Fortescue was considerably amused by Mary's taking hold of a spoon to give her potatoes, when she told her to take some salt; and by Lily's saying "no," when she inquired if the rose-tree were planted.

When dinner was over, the children followed their mother into the drawing-room, and were desired to open two rather large parcels which stood upon a table, wrapped in silver paper. To their surprise and pleasure, two beautiful work-boxes appeared to view. They were made of tortoise-shell, and each had a silver lock, and a little silver plate, upon which the initials of the children were engraved. The inside lined with

blue satin, and plentifully stocked with everything necessary for little workers, gave equal satisfaction; and silver bodkins, needle-cases, thimbles, scissors, and stilettoes, &c. were examined minutely again and again. Under the lid of each box were quickly discovered silks of all colours, cotton, tape, braid, buttons, and many other things.

"Oh! Mamma," said Mary, "what beautiful prizes! I wanted a work-box of all things, and these are such beauties. Lily, you will not say again that you hate work, will you? Thank you, dear Mamma," continued Mary, as she and Lily joyfully kissed their mother.

"Mamma," said Lily, "it is very kind of you to give me this beautiful work-box, for I have been often so idle; but you shall see I will not be so any more. I will never say again that I hate the working hour; but work hard like Mary. I will indeed!"

"You will not say again, as you did this morning, that you would never do a stitch of work when you grew up to be a woman; and that you hated the very sight of your pinafores, because you had to make them yourself," said Mrs. Fortescue, in a grave tone, though her lips trembled with the effort to suppress a smile.

"No, Mamma, I will not," said Lily, blushing deeply. "I don't like work, but I will try to like it, indeed I will. It is the sitting still for an hour that I hate the most; but that is nothing."

"It ought to be nothing, my child," said her mother, "and I trust it will be nothing in future. It is my duty to teach you needlework; and it is your duty to learn it, whether you like it or not.

Do you understand?" said she, as she drew her little daughter to her side, and kissed her.

"Yes, Mamma," said Lily, after a pause; "but I can't see why *we* should do plain work. Annie Wood seemed quite to wonder when we told her that we helped you to make our own things; and that very soon we were to help you to work for the poor."

"What did she say?" inquired her mother.

"Oh! she said that she never heard of ladies who were rich like *you* doing plain work. She said that it was very well for poor people, but that her mamma thought that it was quite waste of time; and that she never did any, nor her mother either."

"Yes," said Mary, "and she said that young ladies like us were always taught fine kinds of work; to crochet, and make wax-flowers, and those things. The last time we were there, Mamma, she showed us such pretty wax-flowers that she had made at school; there was a fuchsia, so like real, that we thought at first it was the real flower; did not we, Lily?"

"I have no doubt that it was very pretty," said their mother. "Fancy work of many kinds is both elegant and useful; and I shall be very glad that you should, as you grow older, devote a little time occasionally to work of that sort. But, my children, I say a *little* time; and that only occasionally. I have seen sad instances of waste of time by young ladies spending the greater part of their days in work of a light and frequently useless description, and I hope you will never be betrayed into such a misuse of the time which God has given you for more serious employment."

"Mamma," said Mary, "Lily and I will not do so when we grow up. We will be good and industrious; we will never forget all you have taught us, and make you sorry!"

"No," said Lily. "We will learn all you wish us, pretty things and useful things; and do them just at the right time;" and taking up her beautiful box as she spoke, Lily was soon, like Mary, absorbed in the contemplation of its contents.

As soon as the children had left the drawing-room, and had gone again into the garden to play, a knock at the door announced the approach of Mrs. Allen.

The nurse was the first to speak; and both in her look and tone, a little uneasiness betrayed itself. She told Mrs. Fortescue that she did not think Mary was quite well; that she had been for the last two or three nights feverish and restless, and had awakened more than once in the middle of the night, complaining of thirst.

Mrs. Fortescue did not seem surprised. She had, to her sorrow, observed several times lately, signs of a little weakness in Mary. Generally, however, the child had appeared so playful, and merry, as almost to lead her mother into the belief, that though she was sometimes a little disordered, her health was, upon the whole, perfectly good. Mrs. Fortescue, therefore, did not seem to be rendered uneasy by what she heard. She asked Allen a few questions: and then decided upon the adoption of the simple medical treatment which the case seemed to her to require.

The nurse, however, who had had more experience among children, thought a little more

seriously of the matter than did her young mistress; being, however, most unwilling to excite what might be needless alarm in Mrs. Fortescue's mind, she said nothing of her own opinion; and Mrs. Fortescue left her to put on her bonnet and shawl without any feeling of anxiety upon her mind.

She nevertheless, on entering the garden, looked round rather anxiously for Mary, but the children were nowhere to be seen.

"I believe the young ladies are in the summer-house, Ma'am," said old Wilson, who had advanced, on hearing Mrs. Fortescue call, "Mary, Lily—where are you?"

To the summer-house Mrs. Fortescue went, and at the entrance to it Lily met her with her finger upon her lips,—

"Don't speak, Mamma! Mary has fallen fast asleep. Look!" and holding her mother by the dress, Lily drew her inside the little building.

It was so, indeed. With the aid of the cushions, Mary had made herself a very snug couch, and was in a deep sleep. Her new work-box stood close beside her upon the seat, and one little arm was laid over it. There was no weariness in the child's face, no uneasiness in her calm features. Not wishing to awaken her, Mrs. Fortescue forbore even to whisper to Lily, who stepped about on tip-toe. She silently returned to the house, and bringing back with her a large plaid, she spread it as gently as possible over the sleeping child, and sitting down beside her, resolved to remain there until she should awake.

In obedience to a sign from her mother, Lily

took her hoop, and ran away. The day had been warm, but the evenings were beginning to feel rather autumnal, and Mrs. Fortescue determined to arouse Mary, if she did not awake before the sun set. The sun was now low, and gave promise of a glorious setting. Rich clouds of crimson, purple, and gold, stretched along the western horizon, while the rays of the departing orb seemed to become more bright and golden as he sunk lower and lower in the heavens. "Truly," thought Mrs. Fortescue—

"He paints the sky gay as he sinks to his rest;"

and as she continued to gaze on the glowing scene before her, the following beautiful lines arose to her recollection:—

"A cloud lay cradled near the setting sun;
A gleam of crimson ting'd its braided snow.
Long had I watch'd the glory moving on,
O'er the still radiance of the lake below,
Tranquil its spirit seem'd, and floated slow!
Even in its very motion there was rest;
While every breath of eve that chanced to blow
Wafted the traveller to the beauteous west,—
Emblem, methought, of the departed soul!
To whose white robe the gleam of bliss is given,
And by the breath of mercy made to roll
Right onward to the golden gates of heaven;
Where, to the eye of faith it peaceful lies,
And tells to man his glorious destinies."

The shadows of evening grew longer and longer, the dew began to fall, and, at length, the last golden ray of sun-light streamed upon the fair face of the child, and still she slept; and though well covered by the plaid, it was time for both her and Lily to be within doors. Lily had been hovering about near the arbour for some minutes,

and her mother now beckoned to her, and whispered to her to waken Mary by kissing her. A shower of earnest kisses, which immediately fell from Lily's rosy lips, quickly caused her sister to start up, and to look drowsily around.

"Lily," said she, "why am I wrapped up in this plaid?" then glancing at her mother, she started up, saying, "Mamma, when did you come? I must have been asleep a long time, have I not, Lily?"

Lily's answer was a merry laugh, and Mary looked still more perplexed.

"It must be very late, Mamma," she continued; "there is no sun, and when I lay down here I could see it well, it was a long way up in the sky."

"The sun has set, my child," said Mrs. Fortescue, as she replaced the little girl's hat upon her head, and gently smoothed her disordered hair; "little girls who wish to see him set should keep awake, and not go into summer-houses and fall asleep; for the sun will not defer his setting until they awake, he is far too punctual for that."

Mary laughed.

"I never saw such a little girl for sleep," continued Mrs. Fortescue, in exactly the same tone, and with a very humorous look. "Here, I come into the garden, hoping to have a nice time with my children, and behold! I find one of them nestled among cushions, fast asleep in a summer-house; and the other meets me with her finger upon her lips as a sign that I must not speak." Mrs. Fortescue pressed the children closer to her side, as they laughed merrily.

"Now, Lily," continued she, "take all your playthings into the house, and especially that beautiful box, before it is covered with dew; and then we will have a few swift turns upon this broad walk before we go in-doors."

That evening, after the twins were in bed, Mrs. Fortescue seriously considered a plan which had two or three times lately crossed her mind. This plan was, to go with the children for a few weeks to the sea-side; and on mentioning it to the old nurse, she met with such a ready concurrence, that she at once decided that it would be well to go at once. Mrs. Allen, moreover, declared the autumn to be the best time of year for sea-bathing; and urged that the summer being so nearly over, her mistress would have less to regret in leaving her cottage and garden. She ended by observing, that a sojourn by the sea-side was exactly what Miss Mary in particular stood in need of.

"Well," said Mrs. Fortescue, "we will say nothing about the sea-side to the children until Monday morning. I think of visiting Blackpool, on the Lancashire coast; but I will go and see Mrs. Somerville, and talk with her about it; and I must also call upon the Brownes. Do you think we could be ready to leave home on Wednesday? The less delay, I think, the better."

"Oh yes, everything can be ready by Wednesday; but you have not yet said that you wish me to go with you," said Mrs. Allen, smiling.

"You?" said Mrs. Fortescue, "of course, I want you. What could I do anywhere without you? You are the best earthly friend that is now left to me."

The eyes of the old nurse filled with tears of affection and pleasure at these words.

"How delighted the children will be to hear of this new arrangement," said Mrs. Fortescue, smiling; "I think I see Lily capering about wild with joy, and Mary stealing up to me, colouring with pleasure! I do not mean to trouble them much with lessons during the month or six weeks that we are from home; I intend that they shall have plenty of time to run and play, and thus inhale the sweet sea-breezes at their pleasure."

CHAPTER VIII.

On the following Monday morning, as soon as the children had finished their lessons, their mother told them that it was her intention, if all were well, to take them the next Wednesday to Blackpool. Mrs. Fortescue talked to them about the sea, and about bathing, and told them of the rides and drives which they should have upon the seashore; and, also, she told them that, during their stay by the sea-side, she intended that they should be out of doors the greater part of each day, and

that their lessons must therefore be necessarily considerably abridged.

To describe the delight of the twins would be impossible. As Mrs. Fortescue had predicted, Lily danced about the room in great glee, while Mary's gentle face became flushed with pleasure. Quietly she nestled up to her mother's side and said,—

"Shall we bathe in the sea on Thursday, mamma?"

"Yes, my dear, it is probable that you will. If it please God to give us a safe journey, I expect we shall reach Blackpool by two o'clock on Wednesday, so we shall have time to settle ourselves in our new abode before the close of the day."

"Mamma, I shall be afraid to go in the sea."

"Perhaps you will be rather timid at first, Mary, but you must try to conquer that feeling; and if you do try you will soon become accustomed to it, and I have little doubt that you will enjoy it very much."

"Mamma, I shall never like it," said Mary, in a low tone, and drawing closer to her mother's side as she spoke.

"It is very silly of you to think so, my dear," said Mrs. Fortescue. "I shall always go with you to bathe, and do you think, my child, that I would voluntarily put you in the way of danger? If there were danger in your bathing, do you think I would permit you to do it?"

"No, Mamma, I know you would not. I will try and think of that the first thing, and not be afraid."

"Afraid!" exclaimed Lily, running up to her mother, and springing into her lap. "Does Mary

say she shall be afraid to go into the sea? I shall not. You will see, Mary, how brave I shall be; I can go in first, you know, and then you can watch me bathe. Oh, how I will splash about!"

Many were the questions and remarks of the children during this morning, but their mother was obliged to leave them very soon, for there was much to be done before Wednesday. Thinking that it would be best to call at the Rectory early in the day, Mrs. Fortescue sent off the children into the nursery, that they might give the nurse all the assistance they could in packing. They ran away in the highest spirits, and their mother was very soon on her road to the Rectory.

Glad as Mrs. Fortescue felt at the idea of the coming pleasant change of air and scene, there was mixed with her thoughts a feeling of deep regret at leaving home. This visit to the sea-side would be the first which she had undertaken during her widowhood, and she walked slowly along, thinking of all that had passed since her journey to Ilfracombe; and her heart was very full indeed.

Mr. and Mrs. Somerville saw her approach from their windows, and they met her at the gate.

"Thank you for this early visit," said Mrs. Somerville, as she drew Mrs. Fortescue into the house, and assisted her to remove her bonnet and shawl.

"We were just wishing for you," said the Rector, who gave one quick glance at Mrs. Fortescue's tearful face, and then instantly withdrew his eyes. "We have good news to tell you, and we want you to sympathize in our pleasure. But

sit down, we cannot let you leave us for some time, now that we have you so snugly to ourselves."

"I cannot stay long with you," said Mrs. Fortescue, smiling, and hastily dashing away two or three tears which still lingered upon her cheeks; "I have come to tell *you* something, but let me hear your news first."

"We are to have a young friend to live with us," said Mrs. Somerville, "and we hope and believe that she will supply the place of a daughter to us."

"Indeed! who is it?"

"You have heard us speak of our friends, the Clarkes; well, she and her husband are going out again immediately to join in India their only daughter, who is married, and in delicate health. An orphan niece, who has lived with them from childhood, is to remain in England until they return. This I knew some days ago from Mrs. Clarke herself, who wrote and told me that it was her intention to put the young girl to some good school, unless she could contrive to leave her under the care of some friend, which latter plan, she said, she would much prefer. That very day I wrote to Mrs. Clarke, to say how much pleasure it would give Mr. Somerville and myself to receive Agnes Harcourt, and to take the guardianship of her during the absence of her friends from England, and Agnes is to come to us directly. We shall have another letter to inform us of the day of her arrival; it will probably be early next week."

"How old is the young lady?" said Mrs. Fortescue.

"Sixteen last August," replied Mrs. Somer-

ville, "almost a child in age, but a stout, well-grown girl, I hear. Dear Agnes! she will have grown out of all knowledge. It is just nine years since I saw her. She was then, consequently, seven years of age, and a little, puny, delicate child, sickly and pale, though possessing, I remember, clear blue eyes, and light curling hair."

"We thought," said the Rector, as he drew nearer to Mrs. Fortescue, "that Agnes would be a good friend to your little girls, and if I mistake not, they will be much pleased with her. I have reason to believe that she is a good, amiable girl."

"I heartily congratulate you," said Mrs. Fortescue, "on the prospect of such an agreeable companion; and I confess I was selfish enough, as soon as you mentioned her coming, to think of the advantage which her companionship might be to my children. How often have I wished for some young friend with whom I could trust them at any time; and now, without any effort or pains of mine, I am likely to have the very thing that I want. How strangely things come to pass!"

"Not strangely," said Mr. Somerville; "nothing comes strangely from the hand of Him who ordereth all things, and who seeth the end from the beginning. This occurrence is but one of the numberless instances of the loving providence of God, who maketh all things to work together for good to them that love Him."

"Yes, I know it," said Mrs. Fortescue, earnestly. "Oh, that I could more constantly remember it! How many blessings are yet left to me! How much—how very much, I have to be thankful for!"

There was silence for a few moments, and then Mr. and Mrs. Somerville were in their turn surprised to hear of Mrs. Fortescue's intended visit to Blackpool. They warmly approved of the plan, yet they expressed regret at losing, although but for a short season, a friend who was so much valued by them.

The Rector said:

"I almost wish we were going with you; indeed, were it not that Agnes is coming to us, and that a substitute to take my duty could not be found upon such short notice, I would take this part of the year for my holiday, and we might go together."

"I wish you could," said Mrs. Fortescue, "for my sake; but the villagers would not thank me for tempting you to leave them." Then, rising to depart, she expressed a hope of soon seeing her friends again, and of hearing from them during her absence. A few words of affectionate farewell were then exchanged, and Mrs. Fortescue was again on the road homewards.

Vast preparations for the journey were in progress at home. The children had drawn out upon the nursery floor their little hair trunks, and were hastily exercising, during the absence of the nurse, their own discretion as to what should be taken to the sea-side and what should be left behind. When Mrs. Fortescue entered the room, Lily's box was half full of her own toys, and the little girl was looking with a very puzzled face at various piles of clothing which were placed upon the floor ready for packing.

"Mamma," said she, "I must have another box for my things; it is impossible for every-

thing to go in here; you see it is nearly full already."

Her mother smiled.

"Well, just look, Mamma, is there room? I *must* take the skipping-rope, and the balls, and dolls, and —— "

"But, my little girl," interrupted her mother, "we must pack the necessary things first, for they *must* go; and we will see if we can make room for these toys afterwards." And Mrs. Fortescue took them out of the trunk as she spoke.

"But what is this, Lily? Who gave you leave to take this telescope, my dear?"

"Why, Mamma, I thought it would be so nice to look through it at the ships on the sea, so I got it."

"And did you think you were doing right in putting into your trunk what is not yours?" said her mother.

"No, Mamma, but I meant to ask you for it before the trunk was locked."

"But you should have asked me before you touched the telescope, Lily; take it back to its place."

"Oh, Mamma!" exclaimed Lily, bursting into tears, "won't you take it? I want so much to see the sea through it, and so does Mary. Oh, Mamma, *do* take it!"

"I do not know whether I shall take it or not, Lily; take it back to its place."

The little girl went slowly out of the room, and when she returned to the nursery she found the nurse kneeling by the trunks, busily engaged in packing; and she also discovered, to her no small disappointment, that many of her toys had been

replaced in the drawer allotted to them. Mary had been an unwilling witness of a similar change in the arrangement of *her* trunk, and she was sitting rather disconsolately upon the window-seat, her services being for the present dispensed with.

Lily's disappointment at not being allowed to take the telescope was fully shared by Mary. They were both silently watching the arrangements which were busily going forward, when the housemaid opened the door and told the nurse that "Miss Mary and Miss Lily were wanted by their mamma in the drawing-room."

Mrs. Allen wiped away the tears which were still visible upon the face of Lily, and brushed her hair, and then the little girls ran down stairs.

Mrs. Browne and Annie were in the drawing-room when they entered. Annie, who had been from home for some months, looked sincerely pleased to see the little Fortescues again; and the three children obtained permission to go into the nursery to examine a new shell-box which the nurse was about to pack; and they were told that they might remain and witness her proceedings until the drawing-room bell should ring.

Mrs. Fortescue received with much pleasure an excellent account of Willie. The little boy had spent the Midsummer holidays with the school friend whom he had mentioned to Mrs. Fortescue. When speaking of him his mother-in-law said:—

"Oh, there never was a boy so altered for the better as Willie is. Mr. Browne attributes it all to you, Mrs. Fortescue; I get none of the credit; but I don't blame him for that, for, between ourselves, I don't deserve it."

Mrs. Browne said this in her usual half-laugh-

ing way; yet, beneath her assumed carelessness, there were symptoms of real feeling, which did not escape the quick perception of Mrs. Fortescue. She said nothing, however, and the conversation soon afterwards took another turn. Mrs. Browne had, with her family, more than once visited Blackpool, and she gave Mrs. Fortescue much information respecting the sea-bathing, shops, &c., and also recommended lodgings to her.

Mrs. Fortescue told Mrs. Browne that it was chiefly on Mary's account that she had resolved to go for a while to the sea-side.

"Do you not think Mary well?" asked Mrs. Browne. "She always seems to me in such excellent health and spirits. She is not certainly so full of glee as the other little girl, but I should think that she is naturally of a more quiet disposition."

"Yes, she certainly is," said Mrs. Fortescue; "still I do not think she is quite well. How did Annie enjoy her long visit to her school friends?" continued she.

"Oh, very much; in fact, I could hardly get her home again; and even now I am under a promise to send her to Carlisle next month. That is the worst of this going to school; girls are so quick in making friendships, and I cannot bear to deny Annie a pleasure."

"But surely you must be sorry to have your only daughter so frequently absent from home, and for so long a time together."

"Oh, it is a trying thing, of course," said Mrs. Browne, carelessly; "but we cannot expect our children never to wish for change of scene. You

will have to part with yours some time or other, Mrs. Fortescue. Do not think that they will always be as content with their home as they are now."

"Perhaps not," said Mrs. Fortescue, with a little uneasiness in her look and tone, "but I hope that a good education at home will greatly influence my children's tastes and wishes in after-life; at any rate, it will be the best and the only safeguard that I have to bestow. I am certain that God has so far blessed my efforts, and the future I am satisfied to leave in His hands."

"You certainly have been blessed in your children," said Mrs. Browne, in an altered tone, after a few moments' silence. "I wish my little girl was like them, but I fear she never will be. Willie is much changed; he may be made a noble character, but Annie ——"

Mrs. Browne could not finish the sentence. All her affected indifference had vanished, and with a mother's feeling in her look and tone, she bent her head and covered her face with her hands.

Mrs. Fortescue deeply pitied her. The grief which she witnessed was *real*, and she believed that it might be salutary. Irresolute what to say or do (for Mrs. Browne was much older than herself), the young mother sate beside her. If she spoke at all, Mrs. Fortescue determined that it should be the truth in love. Inwardly, she prayed for guidance from above as to what she should say, and when she should speak.

Mrs. Browne, however, soon recovered her composure; and Mrs. Fortescue began to think that the opportunity of saying anything to her had

passed away; and although before she had felt afraid to speak, the idea that the opportunity of doing some good was gone, perhaps for ever, grieved her so much that she could not restrain her tears. She hastily turned away her head that they might not be seen, but not before Mrs. Browne's eyes were fixed upon her.

"Mrs. Fortescue, why should you grieve, who have such a home as this, and everything you can wish for—at least," added Mrs. Browne, correcting herself, "I don't mean *everything;* still, if I were inclined to be envious, I should envy *you*. But come, what is the matter? Why are you weeping? Not for *me*, surely! I never thought you cared for me, or my sorrows; I believe you do, though," she said, in a softened tone, as Mrs. Fortescue quietly wiped away her tears, and looked her full in the face. "Well, have you anything to say to me? or are you afraid to say it? Mine is a desperate case, I know. You will tell me of my disobedient, thankless daughter; of my poor husband, whom I have neglected; of the dear good boy whom I have never loved. You will tell me that all the evils of my comfortless household are of my own creating. You may be right; yet, when things are at the worst, they are sure to mend, you know; and even a Mrs. Browne might reform." Saying which, with a forced laugh, Mrs. Browne threw herself into an easy chair.

"Mrs. Browne," said Mrs. Fortescue, as she took a low seat beside her, and tenderly took her hand in hers, "I believe I should have spoken, even if you had not invited me to do so; but not to reproach you. I should have spoken sincerely

and openly, but I should have offered sympathy and comfort too—I would, indeed."

"Yes, yes," said Mrs. Browne, "I believe what you say; I was half in jest. We want comfort and sympathy under every trial, be it what it may; and I was wrong to suppose that you would not give it. Forgive me, Mrs. Fortescue. You would readily, if you knew how miserable I am, and have been for months."

"Let me take off this shawl and bonnet," said Mrs. Fortescue, "I am going to keep you prisoner. My own arrangements for the sea are made, and Allen will do the rest. We will go up to my dressing-room, where we shall not be disturbed, and have a quiet chat. Will you come?"

Mrs. Browne bowed her head in answer, and passively suffered Mrs. Fortescue to remove her bonnet and shawl; then she quietly arose to follow her, and in a few minutes they were in close converse.

Mrs. Brown was now *herself*. Her artificial manner was thrown aside, and with many tears she recounted her difficulties with Annie, who had become quite unmanageable, though she was little more than thirteen years of age.

"I am surprised to hear it," said Mrs. Fortescue. "I thought you considered her an amiable girl."

"Well, so she did appear, at one time; but you know she has never been subjected to any control; for I have always let her have her own way," said Mrs. Browne, who, much agitated, almost sobbed as she spoke.

"And since when have you discovered in her this froward temper?" said Mrs. Fortescue, after a short silence.

"Why, you know, she has always been a spoiled child; but the first real trouble which I had with her, was about this visit which she has been paying to Mr. and Mrs. Scott, in Edinburgh. Annie was at school with their two daughters, and from what I had heard of them, I judged them to be very unfit companions for my child. The invitation came to me direct from Mrs. Scott. We foolishly allowed her to accept it. Well, Mrs. Fortescue, not to multiply words, to that visit I mainly attribute the deplorable change in Annie's conduct. She was self-willed and vain before she went; but her character exhibited worse faults on her return." Mrs. Browne here related a lamentable instance of Annie's total want of principle. Then with a strong mixture of grief and shame on her countenance, she waited to hear what Mrs. Fortescue would say.

"You would not have told me all this if you had not wished me to speak candidly to you in return," said Mrs. Fortescue, after a short silence. "As for advice or counsel, I am ill able to give it; for God knows how much I have need of it for myself. But, my dear Mrs. Browne, it does seem to me that you have been pursuing an entirely wrong system in the education of your daughter; that you have been building upon a wrong foundation. You have been labouring during the thirteen years of Annie's life, to render her accomplished and attractive in appearance and manner; but you have neglected to educate her *heart*. Unmindful that this world is but a passing scene, you have neglected to teach her those things which make us wise unto salvation. My dear Mrs. Browne, have you not been depending

upon your own efforts to accomplish your wishes respecting this child, without seeking the blessing and aid of Him, without whose grace we cannot even think a good thought."

"It is all true," said Mrs. Browne; "every day, for some years past, I have felt that it has been one great error from beginning to end. Yet it seemed as if I could not turn round, and retrace my steps. I wanted not only sufficient firmness to enter upon a new plan, but also the inclination to take the trouble. Still, I have had moments of bitter self-reproach, which I resolutely concealed from every one; moments when I sincerely repented my mistaken fondness, my sinful neglect of duty. I have had longings, which no one knew of but myself, to become better and more to resemble you."

"I should have been a poor model for your imitation," said Mrs. Fortescue. "But the desires after higher and better things to which you have alluded as having been excited in your mind, were, in themselves, omens for good; for they were the suggestions of that Holy Spirit who often strives long with us, apparently in vain; and were signs that your Saviour was even then regarding you with love and favour. Hitherto, you may have stifled your convictions; but God still waits to be gracious. The Saviour still invites the weary and heavy laden to come to Him for rest; and those who do come, He will in no wise cast out. *My* advice, weak and erring as I am, is of little value; but if you apply for it in God's appointed way, the peace which passeth all understanding may yet be yours."

"You may be weak and erring," said Mrs.

Browne, in a tone of real feeling; "but there is something in your countenance which tells me that *you* have found the peace of which you speak, and which I would give all that I am worth to possess. But when I think of beginning another system with my children, and in my family, it seems terrible. You do not know what my difficulties are, or what a household I have. Yet I will try; cost me what it will, I will make the effort; and you shall see a change."

Mrs. Fortescue was silent. Her hopeful countenance became shaded with disappointment.

"You look very doubtful of the issue," said Mrs. Browne sadly.

"Because it seems to me that you mean to set about this great work in your own strength; to depend upon your own efforts for success. Oh, Mrs. Browne, it will not do; all such attempts are vain! Thousands have found them to be so! Of ourselves we can do nothing; but God's grace is sufficient for the weakest. His strength is made perfect in weakness; and He will give his Holy Spirit to all who ask it. If we ask in faith, nothing wavering, God *will* hear us. By his grace, we shall be enabled to conquer all difficulties; and, safe within the Saviour's fold, we shall possess a peace which the world can neither give nor take away."

Mrs. Fortescue had spoken with her whole heart; and with an earnestness which was apparent in her heightened colour and agitated manner.

Mrs. Browne was much moved. For some moments there was silence; but soon the conversation was resumed, and carried on with mutual interest; and an impression was that day made

upon Mrs. Browne's mind, which was never effaced.

As this lady and her family are about to disappear from this narrative, it may be as well to say, that from this time forward, there was a marked change in her character, and in her household. I do not say that all her faults disappeared, for it was not so; but asking aid from Him who giveth liberally, and upbraideth not, she received strength according to her need; and was enabled, notwithstanding many trials and difficulties, to endure even unto the end.

CHAPTER IX.

The sun had just peeped above the distant hills, when the twins opened their eyes on the long wished-for morning of Wednesday. Both rose instantly; and running to a window which faced the east, they drew aside the blind and looked out. The general appearance was satisfactory. Mary remarked that it looked misty; but that, she said, was because it was so very early in the morning, "in fact," she said, "almost night." Quietly they crept back to bed, that they

might not disturb the nurse, who slept in an apartment opening out of theirs, and who was still sleeping soundly. The children, however, found it impossible to sleep. Partly from having been sent to bed at an earlier hour than usual on the preceding evening, and partly from their anticipation of the coming journey, they were in a state of no small activity and excitement.

After a good deal of conversation had been cautiously carried on in whispers, they once more left their beds, and prepared to dress. Mary opened a drawer; cautious as the movement was, it was sufficient to awake Mrs. Allen, who entered the room just as Mary was stepping into the shower-bath, the string of which it was now the custom of the children to pull for each other every morning.

"Nurse," said Mary, answering the silent look of astonishment with which Mrs. Allen was regarding them; "we have not been able to sleep since the sun rose, so we are going to dress."

"Yes," said Lily, "but *you* need not get up yet, Nurse; lie down again. Mary and I can help each other quite well."

"Well, but, my children," said the nurse, "I must see what time it is before I let you dress; and that timepiece is wrong. I am afraid you must not dress now. It is too early. You will be too much tired by the journey; especially you, Miss Mary."

"Early!" said Lily, running to the window, and drawing up the blind. "Why, look out! The sun has reached such a height!"

"I see, my dear; he rose about an hour ago; he is not very high yet; but, however, I believe

it will be best to let you both get up; for I do not think you will now get any more sleep."

The nurse now went back into her own room to dress, and the children used all possible despatch that they might soon be with their mother. Mrs. Allen, however, told them when they were dressed, that they must not yet disturb their mother, but that they might help her to pack their night-dresses, brushes, and other things; and, accordingly, the carpet-bag belonging to each of the children was packed and locked before they went to their mother.

Mrs. Fortescue was dressed and was reading when the twins entered her room.

"My dear little girls!" she said, when she had kissed and embraced them, "have you observed what a lovely morning it is? The sky is without a cloud."

"Oh yes, Mamma!" exclaimed Mary; "we were up, I believe, before anybody. We almost saw the sun rise."

"Yes, Mamma," said Lily, "and what do you think? We were up before nurse—that is, we were out of bed first, for we could not sleep; and nurse woke up and said we might dress. We had begun a little."

"And, Mamma, we have packed our carpet bags, so we can pack yours now," said Mary, walking up to her mother's toilette table.

"Yes, my love, but Allen will do that. Come here, my little girls, and sit each of you by me. You know we are going many miles from home, and we must beg of God to give us a safe and pleasant journey, and to take care of us while we are away."

The twins knelt by their mother's side while she commended them, their faithful attendant, and herself, to the care and guidance of Almighty God during their intended absence from home. Then Mrs. Fortescue read with the children a portion of Scripture, as was her daily custom, and heard them repeat that beautiful morning hymn which has been and will be repeated by thousands of children of different generations:—

"My God, who makes the sun to know
His proper hour to rise,
And to give light to all below,
Doth send him round the skies;

"When from the chambers of the east,
His morning race begins,
He never tires, nor stops to rest,
But round the world he shines.

"So like the sun would I fulfil
The business of the day;
Begin my work betimes, and still
March on my heavenly way.

"Give me, O Lord, thy early grace,
Nor let my soul complain
That the young morning of my days
Has all been spent in vain."

By this time breakfast was ready, and the children ran merrily down stairs, followed by their mother. The meal was concluded at last; but, as the twins could scarcely sit still three minutes together, but were continually running to the window to see if the carriage was in sight, some time elapsed before the party were quite ready for their departure. The little girls had, however, waited impatiently for some minutes before

the carriage arrived; and then, in high glee, they sprang into it, and seated themselves with much dignity, kissing their little hands to the assembled servants.

Mrs. Fortescue lingered for a few minutes to give some parting directions; then she entered the carriage, followed by Mrs. Allen.

The various objects passed on the road excited much attention, and the fresh autumnal morning air was delightful.

The novelty of the railway journey rendered it highly exciting to the twins; and the rapid rate at which they sped along astonished and delighted them.

When the party left the carriage at the Preston station the crowd was very great, and the children were at first rather frightened by the noise and bustle. Mary seemed almost afraid of losing her mother, for she clung tightly to her dress, and cast very timid glances around her. Lily was soon in the height of enjoyment, as, holding by the nurse's hand, she followed, laughing and talking merrily. The party excited considerable notice as they walked backwards and forwards upon the platform.

"I wish I knew those little girls, Papa," said a rosy little lady, as the twins passed her.

"I wish I knew the *mother*," said an older sister; "but you should not speak so loud, Clara; I believe the lady heard you."

It did not seem unlikely; for, at the next turn, Mrs. Fortescue looked very kindly, and with a slight smile, at the little Clara, who was regarding the twins with a very wistful look; but at that moment the bell rang for the passengers to take

their places, and in another instant they were whirling along, faster than ever.

In less than two hours, the train reached the Blackpool Station. Lily started up, and was with difficulty prevented from putting her head out of the window.

"Never do that, my dear, in a railway carriage," said her mother, as she drew the little girl away, "it might be very dangerous."

"Might it, Mamma?"

"Yes; and though you may not understand *why*, you will believe it because I tell you so, will you not?"

"Yes, Mamma; I will not do it again; but I wanted to look at the sea. I thought we should see it when the train stopped."

"You will see it very soon," said Mrs. Fortescue, smiling. "We must get out now. Keep both of you close by me."

After a few minutes' delay, the party proceeded to a house in Bellevue Square, in which Mrs. Fortescue had secured excellent apartments. Dinner soon followed; and when it was over, the children were very anxious to go out upon the shore. Since, however, there were many arrangements to be made before their mother or the nurse could accompany them, they contented themselves with looking out of the large bay-windows in the drawing-room, from whence they had an excellent view of the sea. It was as smooth as glass: scarcely did a ripple break the stillness of its blue waters, as they glistened brightly under the burning rays of the sun.

"How quiet the sea looks, Mamma," said Lily. "I thought there would be great waves that would

roar, and tumble, and dash about so! This is like the river at home."

"Not quite," said Mrs. Fortescue, smiling.

"No," said Mary; "we can't see across it. What is on the other side, Mamma?"

"The Isle of Man, my dear; I will show it you upon the map when we are settled."

"I hope it will not always be so still as it is now," said Lily; "I want to see waves."

"You will have your wish, my child, in all probability. Scarcely anything that God has made varies so quickly and so frequently as the sea does. Still as it is now, the turn of the tide may bring the roaring waves and dashing spray which you have pictured to yourself. But now I must leave you for a little while; for I must attend to the business of unpacking."

Mrs. Fortescue then left them, and, assisted by Mrs. Allen, and the servants of the house, she proceeded to superintend the unpacking of the luggage, and the arrangement of the sleeping apartments. Then there were the books which had been brought, to be placed properly; and some flowers, which the little girls, anxious to bring them, had held in their hands during the whole journey, were placed in vases; and very soon the aspect of the rooms was materially changed for the better. The children were employed to execute several little commissions, and ran from room to room in great delight at being made of use. Little Mary, however, soon began to show signs of fatigue; and her mother laid her upon a sofa, and told her to be quite still, and try to sleep. Lily did not wish to go out without her; so the nurse went out alone to make some necessary purchases;

and Mrs. Fortescue sat down by the sofa, and began to read. Lily placed herself on the carpet at her feet; and declaring that she was not at all sleepy, also began to read. Soon, however, the book was dropped upon the floor, and Lily's head lay trustingly against her mother's lap. She was sound asleep.

In about an hour, Mary awoke, much refreshed. Lily's nap had been of shorter duration; and after tea, their mother took them out to walk.

Crowds of gaily dressed persons were promenading upon the terrace; and barrel-organs, and other street instruments, were heard in different parts.

Mrs. Fortescue had not seen Blackpool for many years; and she was, consequently, not a little surprised to see the flourishing condition to which it had attained. It was a gay scene which now met her eye; but preferring a less frequented part of the shore, she walked with the children towards Southshore, a retired village almost joined to the outskirts of Blackpool, though about a mile and a half distant from Mrs. Fortescue's lodgings. And now, while the minds of the children were impressed with the vastness and tranquil grandeur of the ocean before them, their mother seized the opportunity to lead them to the contemplation of the power and majesty of Him who created the sea and the dry land.

The twins were very silent; and looked with thoughtful faces at the sea, as their mother spoke.

"This glorious sea," she said, "is one of God's noblest works. Just as it rolls now, it rolled six thousand years ago, when God said, 'Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together in

one place.' I never look at the sea rolling on in its lonely grandeur, without being struck by the thought that we see it exactly as it came from the Creator's hand! In the rest of this globe of ours, fair and glorious as it is, man's influence is everywhere to be felt; marring, but too often, the beauty and glory of God's work. But man can do nothing here."

There was no bathing the next morning; nor for two or three following days; partly because the tide did not well suit, and partly because Mrs. Fortescue thought it better to defer it for a few days, until the children should have become a little more accustomed to the sea air. Mary did not regret the delay; in fact, she rather dreaded the thought of sea-bathing; and her mother prudently avoided the subject as much as possible. She was almost constantly out of doors with the children; for the weather was beautiful, and, though very warm, deliciously tempered by the sea-breeze.

To have an hour's ride upon a donkey, was one of the children's greatest pleasures; and so regularly had they had one every day since their arrival, that their appearance at the donkey-stand with their mother or the nurse was the signal for the selecting of two of the prettiest-looking animals, with which a little boy and girl would run up to the twins, with the usual question, "Want a donkey, Miss?"

There was one thing, however, connected with these donkey excursions, against which both the children, and Mary in particular, always protested. They would not permit their donkeys to be driven by a boy with a stick. Mary had observed, with

much indignation, that various donkey-drivers were accustomed cruelly to beat the poor animals under their charge; and she was so afraid of her own being treated in the same manner, that she would seldom suffer her attendant even to carry a stick.

"You had better throw the stick away," she said one afternoon to the girl who accompanied her on her ride; "I have often seen you go out with people; and you beat your donkeys very much. Please throw the stick away," she repeated, with rising colour, as the girl looked at her in astonishment.

"You'll find it won't stir unless it is beaten, Miss," said she, as she sullenly complied with the request.

"That is because you are cruel to it. Donkeys would not be so stupid and obstinate as they are if they were kindly treated; my mamma says so. Please give the poor thing this piece of bread which I saved from dinner, and then we will go on again."

The girl obeyed, with a look half amused, half contemptuous; and the donkey moved slowly on again, without any other persuasion than a sharp tug at its bridle by the attendant. It seemed to have an instinctive desire to please its gentle rider.

"That is right," said Mary, as she patted the patient, ill-used creature. "Now, please take me close by the sea."

"The tide is coming in, Miss; but I shall take you as near as I can."

"Where is my sister?" said Mary, looking round. "Why, what is the matter with her donkey? It seems as if it would not move."

"It has taken a stupid fit, Miss," said the girl.

It was so indeed. Lily was mounted upon a very stubborn animal; and in spite of the boy's tugging, and the little girl's coaxing, it would not stir.

"Has it been out a great deal already?" said the nurse, as she overtook them.

"No, Ma'am, not at all to-day," said the boy.

"Well then, you must use the whip; but very gently, if you please."

"Yes," said Lily; "just a little touch of the whip will show it that we mean it to go on, and not stand still in this stupid way. I shall never overtake Mary. She is going on so nicely; and I cannot stir an inch."

The boy's notion of a little touch of the whip did not seem to agree with Lily's, for he struck the donkey a sudden and violent blow, which sent it off at full gallop. Lily was thrown off; and her little joyous face presented a very angry expression, and was wet with her tears. She soon, however, regained her feet, and the donkey stood patiently by her side.

"It is all your fault," exclaimed Lily to the boy. "You shall never drive me again; no, never. You naughty, cruel boy!"

"I could not help it, Miss," said the boy, humbly. "You did not tell me that you could not sit a donkey, or I would have led it."

"Led it!" exclaimed Lily passionately, "I did not want you to lead it, you foolish boy! If you had not struck it so, I should not have fallen; but of course I could not keep my seat after what you did: no one could!" And, with recovered dignity,

Lily drew up her little head as she spoke, and wiped away her tears.

"Are you going to mount again, Miss, or not?" said the boy, who had a goodnatured countenance, and was biting his lips to keep himself from laughing.

"Mount again! yes, of course I shall!" said Lily. Then, looking round, she observed that two or three ladies were standing near, looking at her. A little apart from the rest, was a lady-like young girl carrying a basket, over the top of which hung a large bunch of sea-weed. She went up to Lily, and, taking her kindly by the hand, said, "Are you hurt, my dear?"

"No, Ma'am," said Lily, whose face was still covered with an angry flush, as she turned away her head.

"If you are going to mount again, I will lift you into your seat," said the young lady.

Lily consented, and was soon again mounted. Her new acquaintance advised her to let the boy lead the donkey, and as she was going away, she whispered,—

"It was by no intentional fault of his that you fell, my dear; though he did strike the donkey too hard. Had you been used to riding a donkey, you would not have slipped off then. You have been unjustly angry; and you should tell your little attendant that you are sorry."

"Did you hear what I said?" said Lily, colouring deeply; "I thought no one was near me."

"Yes, my child, I heard it all; but that matters not. The passionate words and the sinful temper in which you indulged, were seen and heard by Almighty God; and He is displeased by them.

But now, I must leave you. Good bye, my dear;" and with a kind kiss the young lady left Lily and proceeded on her walk.

Just then the nurse came up to her little charge. She had seen what had happened; but as Lily had instantly recovered her feet, she was satisfied that the child was not hurt. On seeing her approached and conversed with by a stranger, Mrs. Allen had quickened her pace.

The little girl was still in a very ill humour; and not a little ashamed of herself. She told the nurse the whole affair, frankly repeating the angry words which she had used. The little donkey-boy listened attentively to what passed, with a strong mixture of respect and pity for Lily in his countenance.

"You have been very naughty," said Mrs. Allen, as she lifted Lily down from her seat upon the donkey. "I don't want you to say anything now to the boy; and as soon as your sister comes, I shall take you home. Mrs. Fortescue will be unwilling to let you have any more rides, if you behave in this way when you are out of her sight."

As Mrs. Allen finished speaking, Mary came up, looking very happy. The first glance showed her that Lily was in disgrace; and springing from her seat she ran up to her, inquiring what was the matter.

"Lily, dear Lily! why have you been crying? and why did not you come up to me? I have had such a long ride, and I wanted you so much!" said Mary, as she wiped away her sister's tears with her own handkerchief.

Lily once more told her disastrous tale, and

slowly and sadly the children walked with the nurse towards the lodgings. On their way, they met the young lady who had accosted Lily. She did not address them, though she appeared attentively to observe them both; especially Lily, who hung her head as she passed.

Mrs. Fortescue was just preparing to go out when the twins entered the house. Mary immediately ran up to her mother, and said,—

"Mamma, please do not be angry with Lily! She is very sorry; and she will never do so again."

"Do what again?" said her mother, in some surprise. "I am afraid you have been naughty," she continued, turning to Lily, who had slowly followed Mary into the room.

The little girl stood silent; but with a pouting lip and angry brow, while the nurse told Mrs. Fortescue what had passed.

"I am very sorry that a little girl of mine has spoken so unjustly and unkindly to a poor little donkey-boy; one who has perhaps no one to teach him what is good, and who is constantly meeting with harsh treatment. I believe that many of these poor children live in the midst of neglect and hardship such as we can form no idea of. If they hear a kind word addressed to them, it is when they attend upon those who hire their donkeys. I should have thought that a child of mine would have pitied these poor little girls and boys, and tried to do them some good, instead of venting upon them her own unjust and angry feelings."

Lily's affectionate heart was touched. She burst into tears.

"You must make this poor boy what reparation is in your power, Lily; and for that purpose, you shall accompany me to the donkey-stand to-morrow; but that is not all. You have again given way to the passionate temper which I had begun to hope you had almost conquered. It is long since you have grieved me so much. You must remain in the house and in your own room for the rest of the day. No," continued Mrs. Fortescue, as Mary was silently following her sister; "you must not go with Lily, Mary, I want you to go out with me."

Mary had learned the lesson of obedience; yet it was with a very sorrowful face that she turned to the window to conceal the grief and disappointment of which her little heart was full.

"It was to have been such a happy day, Mamma," said she, after they had walked for a few minutes in silence; "Lily and I made such plans, and now ——"

"I am very sorry that Lily should have been so naughty," said Mrs. Fortescue. "I have no doubt she will be very sorry for it to-morrow; but Lily must learn to control this passionate froward temper. Besides making God angry with her, she makes herself miserable, and all around her uncomfortable. My little Mary, you do not know to what a fearful height such feelings may increase in the sinful hearts of men; nor to what wickedness they may lead, if not checked and prayerfully striven against in childhood. Now, see, I am going to hire one of that long row of carriages, and have a drive. Should you like to go with me?"

"Oh yes, Mamma, if only poor Lily could be

with us. It will not be half such a treat without her."

"I know it, my child; but that cannot be helped. Lily must take the consequences of being naughty. Now get in," continued her mother, after she had spoken for a few moments with the driver of a very pretty little carriage. "It is rather late, and we must not stay out long."

Mary stepped in with a very sober face, and the carriage proceeded at a quick pace towards Southshore.

The sea presented a different aspect on this evening from that which they had seen on the day of their arrival. There were waves of no small magnitude, and they were dashing and rolling over one another with a great noise. Little Mary watched them with great interest, as they came rolling onwards towards the shore, and broke at last with a roaring noise, the salt spray flying about in all directions.

"Do you see those vessels in the distance, Mary?" said her mother.

"Yes, Mamma, I was counting them; there are six in all."

"I brought the telescope with me, Mary, and some day I will let you look through it at the vessels which are so frequently seen here."

"Thank you, Mamma; but it makes me sorry to look at them," said Mary, in a low tone.

"Why, my child?"

"Because, Mamma, I know that so many ships have sunk, and that the people in them have been drowned; and I heard Miss Cookson say the other day, to nurse, that this is a dangerous coast."

"So it is, my dear; and, as you say, there are many shipwrecks. But, Mary, those who go down to the sea in ships, and occupy their business in the great waters, need not fear being suddenly taken away from this world, if only they have made their peace with God, by believing in the Saviour whom He hath sent. My little girl, there are doubtless in the depths of this mighty ocean very many bodies of men and women and children whose souls are now happy, and at rest with God."

"But," said Mary, "there is often not time to pray to God. I have read of people that have been drowned in a moment, and *that* is the dreadful thing!"

"Dear child, it is; yet we who are not exposed to this danger, namely, the perils of the great deep, should remember, that in the midst of life we are in death; that God may remove us at any time, at any moment of our lives; and wherever we are, or however young and full of life and vigour we may be. And, Mary, there are other dangers besides those of the sea. Sudden deaths may occur in railway travelling, thunder-storms, and in many other ways. While we remember this, we should be thankful for God's tender care and watchfulness, and trust in Him always, knowing that He cannot do wrong, and will make all things work together for good to them that love Him. If we are in the Saviour's fold, whenever death may come, or in whatever form it may come, we shall be ready to leave this world, and shall be eternally safe."

When the carriage stopped at the door of Bellevue House, Mary's thoughts returned to Lily, and she begged earnestly to be allowed to go to

her, but Mrs. Fortescue would not consent, and the little girl was obliged to leave her hat and cape in her mother's room. As she passed the room in which Lily was, Mary could not, however, refrain from stopping for a few moments at the door; and she could distinctly hear the sound of sobbing within. She was moving softly away to tell her mother that Lily was crying, when the door opened, and the little culprit herself appeared in the passage.

"I thought it was you, Mary. Oh, do ask mamma to come to me!"

Mary instantly ran down stairs, and soon returned with her mother. In the meantime Lily had retreated into her room and shut the door. She had heard, on the departure of Mary, signs of the unwelcome approach of the people of the house; then half-smothered exclamations met her ear of—"Poor little thing! Why don't they let her out? I declare I have a good mind to step in and comfort her."

"You had better not," said another voice, very audibly; "the mother looks pretty determined, although she speaks so quietly; and she might not thank you for your interference."

In great dismay at this threatened visit of condolence, Lily sate listening almost breathlessly to the sound of footsteps which seemed to be retreating. Presently the door opened, and Mrs. Fortescue entered the room.

"Oh, Mamma, are you come!" exclaimed Lily, and the next moment, throwing her arms about her mother's neck, she burst into tears.

"Lily," said Mrs. Fortescue, "I hope you are sorry for having been so naughty, and that you

will try to keep a better guard over yourself in future."

"Yes, Mamma," said the child, "I will indeed."

"I thought you had, in a great measure, conquered this passionate temper; it is now long since you have given way to it, as you did to-day," said her mother, in a sorrowful tone, as she quietly disengaged herself from the firm hold of the little girl.

"Mamma," said Lily, speaking very earnestly, "I will tell you how it happened. This morning, when I got up, I looked out, and saw great waves in the sea, and there was such a fine wind blowing them about, so I hurried over dressing, and just said a little prayer quite quick, and then I ran out, and told Mary that I would be in again in a few minutes; and I thought, you know, Mamma, that I should have time to say my prayers, without being in a hurry, when I came back. But I had not. I stayed out a long time, making balls of sea-weed, and watching them tossed about by the waves, and when I came back, it was breakfast-time, and I had only just time to take off my things before the bell rang. I was very uncomfortable, and all the morning I felt as if I could hardly help being vexed at quite little things. Nothing made me feel happy all day. And now, Mamma," continued Lily, as she hid her face upon her mother's shoulder, "every morning for a long time, I have begged God more than anything to keep me from being passionate and angry; but I did not this morning, so I was cross for nothing to the poor boy."

"Dear child!" said Mrs. Fortescue, "you have indeed discovered a sufficient cause for your ill

conduct this morning. If we neglect to ask for the help of God's Holy Spirit, we cannot hope to be kept from temptation for a day, or even for an hour. My little girl, I shall not regret so much what has happened to-day, if it have led you to see more clearly, that you cannot do what is right unless God helps you, and that if you do not constantly seek for his guidance, you are sure to go astray. Have you asked God to forgive you?"

"Yes, Mamma; and I am very sorry. I don't want to come down stairs until to-morrow, for I know it is right that I should be punished. But now, Mamma, about the boy. I should like to go down to him in the morning, and I have been thinking what I could give him that he would like. Do you think one of my balls would please him, Mamma?"

"I do not think he would care for playthings, my dear, especially as he has so much to do all day. He may not have any time for play. But I dare say that we shall be able to think of something in the morning that he would like. And now, good night, my child. Mary will join you very soon."

CHAPTER X.

Some time before breakfast, on the following morning, the twins were up and dressed and equipped for walking.

"Now, dear children," said Mrs. Fortescue, as she entered their room, also shawled and bonneted, "it is at present too early for us to see the donkey-boy; he will probably not be down upon the shore for two or three hours, but I mean to take you to bathe this morning. Nurse, if you will take Lily under your care, Mary shall go with me. We will have two machines that stand close

together; and Mary shall go into one with me, and you can take Lily with you."

Lily gave her mother a very bright look as this arrangement was made, and with many exclamations of pleasure, as they walked along, began to skip and dance about as if she were already in anticipation bounding amongst the waves of the sea. Mary did not speak; she only pressed closer to her mother's side, while for a few moments her eye rested upon a long row of machines which stood at a little distance. They walked on quickly. The morning air was very bracing; and the golden rays of the sun were reflected brightly in the blue waters.

They soon approached the row of machines. Mrs. Fortescue selected two of those which were at the end of the row, and by which stood a young woman in attendance.

Quietly Mary allowed the young woman to help her up the steps of the machine, and when her mother had entered too, and the door was closed, she peeped through one of the round holes in her machine, and caught a glimpse of Lily's merry face.

"Make haste and get undressed, Mary," said she, "I quite long to be in! Don't you?"

But the question was not answered. The round hole was closed by Mrs. Fortescue's hand.

Mary was quickly undressed, and had just placed herself upon her mother's lap, when the machine began to move.

"Sit still, my dear, until it stops," said Mrs. Fortescue, as Mary, after remaining quiet for a few moments, started up.

"But I want to see the sea, Mamma," said Mary, whose little heart began to beat more

quickly, as the splashing occasioned by the horse's hoofs convinced her that she was no longer on dry land.

"Never mind seeing now, my child. Sit still."

Mary obeyed, and the next instant the door was unlocked, and opened, and the bathing-man received Mary in his arms.

"Wait a moment!" she exclaimed, "please wait! Mamma, tell him to wait a moment."

The bathing-man set her again upon the steps of the machine, in obedience to a signal from Mrs. Fortescue; and Mary stood with flushed face and trembling limbs, looking at Lily, who repeatedly called to her to watch, while she fearlessly performed such feats as the very firm grasp of the bathing-man would permit. Yet even Lily had quaked at the moment of the first dip over-head; but that over, she gave herself up to the most complete enjoyment. Mary watched her for some moments with mingled emotions of admiration and fear.

"Now, Mary dear," said her mother, "you see Lily is perfectly safe, and you may be sure that I would not trust either her or you to bathe, if I were not convinced that it was both safe and desirable that you should do so. Don't stand there any longer, or you will take cold; besides, you are keeping the bathing-man waiting, and his time is valuable."

"I know," said the child in a sorrowful tone. "Well," she continued, holding out her little arms, "put me in then, if I must bathe."

But her mother, at this moment, laid her hand upon Mary's heart; it was beating so quickly, and there was such a visible trembling of her

whole frame, that Mrs. Fortescue deemed it unwise to insist upon her bathing that day.

"You seem very much frightened, my child," said she, "and it is very foolish of you to be so. However, I do not wish you to bathe to-day, if you dread it so much. Come in, and make haste in dressing."

Mary did so, feeling both glad and sorry; and Mrs. Fortescue, having paid the man for his fruitless trouble, called to Lily, who was still splashing about.

"Go in now, Lily; you have been long enough in the water."

"But I want to wait till Mary comes out, Mamma," said Lily, putting aside her matted brown locks as she addressed her mother.

"Mary is not going to bathe to-day. Go in, my love, at once."

When the twins were dressed, and again together upon the shore, Lily gave her sister an animated description of the pleasure of bathing.

"You do not know how delicious it was, Mary. I wish you had not been afraid! Do you think you shall bathe the next time?"

Mary said that she did not know. She began to wish that she had not been frightened; and two or three times she inwardly resolved that she would be more courageous the next time. Now that it was all over, she quite regretted her cowardice, especially as Lily had enjoyed her bathing so much.

Mrs. Allen now left the children together for a short time, having some domestic matters to attend to, and they sate down upon the beach while their mother bathed.

"Do you know, Mary," said Lily, "I mean to ask if we may bathe again to-morrow."

"Nurse said every other day," said Mary, with a look of satisfaction.

"Yes, I know; but I cannot wait till Friday."

At this moment there passed close to them the young lady whom Lily had seen the day before, during her unfortunate donkey excursion. She was not alone this time. A gentleman, apparently her father, or some near relative, and who had a very benevolent expression of countenance, was on one side of her, and on the other, a brown spaniel, which she held by a silver chain.

"The very same," said Lily to herself. "Mary, it is," she added aloud, "it is the lady."

"What lady?" said Mary.

"The lady who came to me yesterday. Don't you know? I have a good mind to run after her, and get another peep at her face—such a pretty face, Mary."

"I think perhaps you had better not," said Mary. "I should like to see her too, very much; but as mamma is not with us, perhaps——"

Mary's answer to Lily's proposal was interrupted by the approach of their mother. To her Lily pointed out the retreating figures of the lady and gentleman.

"I am glad you did not follow the lady, dear Lily," said Mrs. Fortescue. "Never obtrude yourself upon the notice of any one; to do so, shows a want of good breeding. Young people, especially, should never intrude themselves into the society of grown-up persons, but should wait until they are taken notice of, which they are more likely to be, if they conduct themselves with

the modest diffidence suitable to their age, than if they put themselves improperly forward."

At breakfast there was much discussion respecting the present which should be made to the donkey-boy. Lily spread upon the table her whole amount of pocket-money, and listened with a puzzled countenance to various suggestions which were made by Mary.

"What do you think of a Bible, Lily?" said her mother, at length.

"I don't know, Mamma; I thought of that my own self; but I asked him if he could read, and he said, 'no.'"

"That is a great pity, my love; still he may learn to read some day; he is very young."

"Yes, Mamma, to be sure he may! I did not think of that. I will buy him a Bible; but there is more than enough here to pay for it, is not there?" continued Lily, as she offered her purse to her mother.

"Yes, my dear, much more; but do you mean to lay out all this money upon the little boy? It is nearly the whole of your monthly allowance; and September, you know, is not half over yet."

"I know, Mamma," said the little girl, after a few moments' hesitation, "but I wish to give him all that is in my purse, if you will help me to choose what he will like best."

"It is all she has, Mamma," said Mary eagerly, "except three shillings; and that is put away to go towards Willie's Christmas gift."

"Well, Lily," said her mother, "you must decide. Remember that you may want something for yourself before the month is out."

Lily thought again with a very serious face; then she said,

"Yes, Mamma, but I do not mind that. I will give it all."

"Well, then, I think you might get him some cloth for a new jacket, my love. I observed what a very ragged one he was wearing, poor boy, the first day that I took you to the donkey-stand."

"Yes, Mamma," said Lily, with a very bright look, "that will be the very thing! And will you come with us now? I think breakfast is quite over. Have not you finished, Mary?" added she, looking at her sister, who seemed disposed to linger.

"I should like some more toast, please, Mamma," said Mary, "and some more milk. I am always so hungry now," added the little girl, as her mother gave her what she wished for; "and I am always so well! At home I was well, but I used to be tired very soon. But here I can run about ever so much; and then only feel a little tired. I suppose it is the sea air that is making me so strong, for nurse said she thought it would."

Mrs. Fortescue made no reply to what Mary had said, but she looked at her with a deeply thankful expression of countenance; and secretly she lifted up her heart in fervent gratitude to her heavenly Father for this mark of his loving-kindness. Any tender mother, to whom a similar mercy has been vouchsafed, may imagine the weight of anxiety which this decided improvement in her little daughter's health removed from the mind of Mrs. Fortescue.

When breakfast was over, the party proceeded first to a bookseller's, on the Centre-Beach, where a Bible in strong binding and large print was purchased; and afterwards to a neighbouring haberdasher's, where a suitable material for a jacket and trowsers was selected by Mrs. Fortescue.

With the new Bible in her hands, and followed by a person bearing the large parcel of cloth, Lily proceeded with her mother and sister to the donkey-stand.

The little boy of whom they were in search was out with a riding party, but was expected back in a few minutes; and a woman, who was standing near to the stand, introduced herself to Mrs. Fortescue as his mother. She was a tall, powerful looking woman, and had a harsh, ill-tempered appearance; but the lines which care had traced on her anxious countenance were too plainly marked not to excite Mrs. Fortescue's compassion. She called to the twins, who stood at a little distance, and said,

"Lily, this is the mother of the little boy whom you wish to see."

The little girl looked in the face of the woman for an instant with a shy glance, then fixed her eyes upon the ground.

"Well, Lily," said Mrs. Fortescue, after a short pause, during which the woman had been attentively scanning the elegant little figure before her, "have you nothing to say to this person?"

"Yes," said Lily, conquering with some difficulty her feeling of repugnance. "Your little boy went with me when I rode yesterday; and I fell from the donkey; and I was very angry,

and I blamed him for the fall; but it was not his fault at all, but mine. I was passionate, and I have come to tell him that I am sorry, and to ask if he will take these things which I have brought for him. Do you think he will?" As she asked this question, the little girl raised her honest eyes, and fixed them upon the woman's face with an earnest gaze, which almost embarrassed her.

"My sweet little lady," she began, but glancing at Mrs. Fortescue, something in the face of that lady warned her that no species of flattery was expected, or would be permitted. In a tone of much respect, she continued,

"I am sure you need not to have said a word about such a thing; and as to my poor boy, he never said anything to me about it, so you may think how little he thought about it. Don't distress yourself, Miss, about such a trifle;" and with a low curtsey to Mrs. Fortescue, the woman walked away.

She had scarcely left them before the boy himself appeared, running at full speed after six or seven child-laden donkeys, which were approaching the donkey stand. In a moment Lily was by his side, speaking earnestly to him; and before her mother or Mary could reach her, the parcel was opened, and its treasures fully displayed to the wondering eyes of the boy. He had quite forgotten the occurrences of the day before; and at the time had merely thought that the little lady whom he was attending was *spoiled*—a thing but too common amongst the children who visited Blackpool to excite more than a passing thought in his mind. In fact, having followed donkeys

almost ever since he could run alone, he had become acquainted with more petted children than he could remember.

He said nothing but "Thank you kindly, Miss," touching his cap as he spoke; but the heightened colour of his honest face, and the grateful expression of his eyes, was acknowledgment more welcome to the affectionate heart of the little girl than any words could have been.

"But I am afraid it will be some time before you can read it," said Lily, rather sorrowfully, as the boy turned over the leaves of his handsome Bible, with a look of curious interest.

"I don't know, Miss; but mother says I am to go to school when the season is over, and that will be in less than six weeks, now, we expect."

Mrs. Fortescue and Mary had by this time joined them, and Mrs. Fortescue put a few questions to the little boy, to see if he had been taught anything respecting his God and Saviour. She found, that deplorably ignorant as he was, he yet knew something of the leading truths of the Gospel; and speaking to him in a way that he could understand, she endeavoured to lead his mind to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world.

Attentively the boy listened; and at length he drew the sleeve of his well-worn jacket across his eyes, and turned away his head.

Mrs. Fortescue continued to talk to him in the gentlest and most simple manner, and when she paused, the boy spoke.

"Lady," said he, "I have heard of heaven. It lies up there, far away," (pointing to the blue sky above him.) "It is a beautiful place, I know.

Angels live there, and people say there is no hard work there, nor cross words—nothing but rest and happiness. But it is not for poor boys like me."

"And do you think, my poor boy, that you cannot go there, for Christ's sake, and be holy and happy like those angels?" said Mrs. Fortescue.

"Go to heaven!" said the boy almost passionately. "Lady, you know nothing about such as I am. Tell me that I may one day own six or seven donkeys, and I may believe you; but poor lads like me have no one to teach them anything but how to work for their bread, and that they must very often pick up as they can. If we learn anything, it is how to cheat and say bad words, and very often how to lie and steal into the bargain. None of us are taught how to live so that we may go to heaven when we die. I should not know the little that I do, but some three years ago there was a clergyman here who taught me something; and I should have learned more from him if I had gone oftener to the Sunday-school."

The boy was the son of a fisherman, and possessed much of the energy of thought and expression which is often found in persons early conversant with the sea.

"Is there no Sunday-school here now?" said Mrs. Fortescue, after a short pause.

"I never heard of it if there is," said the boy, moving away.

"Do not go," said Mrs. Fortescue, gently. "I want to talk to you for a few minutes."

The boy stood still, and most patiently and judiciously did his kind friend endeavour to impress upon him some of the essential truths of

Christianity. He was far from appearing either inattentive or ungrateful.

"Lady," he said, as he turned away, "I know it's nothing but the truth that you speak, and I hope you'll pray for the poor donkey-boy. I'll learn to read anyhow; and maybe," he added, his eyes filling with tears, "I'll not think again that there's no heaven for me. But I must be a vast deal changed before I am fit for such a place."

"My poor boy," said Mrs. Fortescue, "we all need a vast change before we can be fitted for heaven. But if you pray God to send his Holy Spirit into your heart, He will make you fit for it. You must pray earnestly to be kept from sin, and to be led into the right way; and if you do this, God will, for Christ's sake, give you a heart full of love for Him; and then you will constantly strive to please and obey Him, and when you die you will be taken to heaven for your Saviour's sake. But now, my boy, we must go home. Don't forget your promise to learn to read your Bible. And may God Almighty bless you, and bring you to a knowledge of himself, and then heaven will be your home for ever."

With tearful eyes the twins watched the little boy as he walked away; fervently their little hearts responded "Amen" to their mother's prayer for him.

"Do you think, Mamma, that little boy will grow up good?" said Mary.

"I hope he may, my dear; I would willingly hope that God has already begun a good work in his heart. If He has done so, He will finish it in his own good time."

Soon after dinner, the same day, a card was given to Mrs. Fortescue, bearing the names of a lady and gentleman, who, as she was told, were at the door. Mrs. Fortescue gave a little start of surprise as she read the names. The children were out with the nurse, which their mother regretted.

Agnes Harcourt (for it was no other) ran quickly up the stairs, followed by her uncle.

"Mrs. Fortescue," she exclaimed, with a countenance beaming with delight, "I thought I should surprise you. I mean you to love me, you know. I have heard so much of you through Mr. and Mrs. Somerville, that it seems as if I had known you a long time." And the young girl put her arms round Mrs. Fortescue's neck, and kissed her affectionately as she spoke.

"You do indeed surprise me!" said Mrs. Fortescue, as soon as she could speak. "So you are the Agnes Harcourt who is to live with the Somervilles; and this is your uncle, I presume," she added, as she gracefully welcomed Mr. Clarke. "But how is it that you are in Blackpool? I thought you were going down to Mr. Somerville directly. How long have you been here?"

"Only two or three days," said Mr. Clarke. "I had some business at Preston which delayed me a short time; but I shall probably leave tomorrow, and shall take Agnes at once to her friends in Westmoreland, and then return to town for a few days previously to setting out for India. I know I leave my dear Agnes in good hands, and God knows how thankful I am that I do so; but the parting is a terrible thing to contemplate."

"I need not say that I sympathise with you deeply," said Mrs. Fortescue; "but your niece shall not want friends to love and care for her; and I trust that we shall soon have the pleasure to welcome you again in England, and to deliver up to you again this dear girl well and happy. But how did you find me out, Miss Harcourt?" continued Mrs. Fortescue.

"I wish we had found you out sooner," said Agnes. "We were in the library this morning for the first time; and I saw your name amongst the list of visitors. I suspect," she continued with a smile, "that I have already made acquaintance with one of your little daughters. A little girl whom I accosted yesterday upon the shore is so like you."

"Oh! I know all about that," said Mrs. Fortescue. "My child forgot herself completely, but——"

"Are these your little people?" said Mr. Clarke, rising and walking to the window, just as two little girls walked past it with wooden spades in their hands.

"Yes," said Mrs. Fortescue.

Agnes Harcourt started up to look out; but the next instant the door opened, and the twins appeared. Mary hung back at the sight of the strangers. Lily looked for a moment at the young lady, and blushed deeply.

"I have already had the pleasure of making your acquaintance, my dear, have I not?" said Miss Harcourt to Lily, as she took her hand.

"This is the young lady of whom you have spoken to us, is it, Lily?" said her mother.

"Yes, Mamma," said Lily. Then, turning to

Miss Harcourt, she added, "But I have seen you two or three times since then."

"And so have I you, my dear," said the young lady; "and I saw you from a distance this morning, when you presented a little donkey-boy with a book, which I discovered afterwards to be a Bible. I thought the little girl whom I was watching had made ample reparation for her ill conduct on the previous day, and had acted very nobly."

Lily's bright eyes kindled at this praise; and with a face expressive of conscious pleasure she looked at her mother. But Mrs. Fortescue changed the subject, by asking Agnes Harcourt whether she had bathed; and the same question was addressed by the young lady to Mary.

The little girl coloured; and was obliged to confess that she was afraid to bathe.

"That is a great pity," said Mr. Clarke; "you will lose a great pleasure if you do not overcome this feeling, my little girl; and it is a very groundless one."

"Yes," said Mary, "mamma says so; but Friday is bathing day again, and I do mean to be as brave then as Lily is. Now, Mamma, you shall see I will," continued Mary in a very earnest tone, as her mother received her assurances with a somewhat doubtful smile.

"Well," said Miss Harcourt, "I may be on the shore before breakfast on Friday, though I am not certain that I shall stay so long; but if I do stay, I shall be able to see if you keep your word. Do you know," continued Agnes, as she drew the twins to her side, "that I am going to live with Mr. and Mrs. Somerville, who are such good friends of your mother? I am perhaps going to

them to-morrow, and I shall be very glad to see you again at your own home. I believe I shall soon love both of you very much; and if Mrs. Fortescue will allow it, we can have some very pleasant walks together."

"Yes," said Mrs. Fortescue, "this young lady will, I hope, often come to see us; and I trust you will be good little girls, so that she may never have reason to change her opinion of you."

Mrs. Fortescue then prepared to go out with her visitors; and the rest of the day was spent most pleasantly by the whole party. Lily and Mary soon made acquaintance with Miss Harcourt, and before they separated in the evening, they had called her "Agnes" and given her many kisses.

Their mother attentively observed the young lady, and listened to her conversation; and very soon she had decided that Mr. Somerville's opinion of her was a just one, and that she was likely to prove a comfort and blessing to her friends, and a very great acquisition to herself.

Mr. Clarke did not stay at Blackpool another day, but proceeded on his journey early on the following morning. The twins witnessed the departure of Agnes Harcourt with sorrow, for they had already begun to love her. They went with their mother to the station, to see her and her uncle off by the train; and afterwards they went down to the shore, and seated themselves beside their mother upon the cliff. Presently they drew closer to their mother's side, and begged her to tell them a story.

"A story," said Mrs. Fortescue; "well, I don't know. What sort of a story shall it be? Some-

thing like 'The Apple Pie,' in 'Mary and Florence?'" added she, laughing.

"Yes, Mamma, if you like," said Mary. "Only, please, a true story let it be."

"Well, my children," said Mrs. Fortescue, after she had considered for a few moments, "we were talking this morning about being patient under sickness, or any other affliction; and, Lily, you said that you thought you could not be patient if you were like the poor lame man whom we saw yesterday; or if you had, from any cause, lost the use of your limbs. The last time that I was staying here, I met with a most striking instance of the truth, that the heart of a man, or woman, or child, who *loves* and *trusts* in God, is filled with peace and contentment under the severest trials. I was walking along this part of the shore one very beautiful morning, in the beginning of autumn. There were numbers of people walking about; children and young people, in the first bloom of youth and vigour, were riding or walking, or sitting upon the cliff, inhaling the fresh sea-breezes. Everything which met the eye bespoke life and gaiety; and there was not a sign by which I could be reminded that affliction and sorrow, sin and death, were abroad in the world: so beautiful and attractive was the scene around me.

"Suddenly, a painful scene presented itself. From a bathing machine in the distance, at the very edge of the sea, there walked a young girl, supported by two older women. Half led, half carried, she approached nearer and nearer to the place where I stood, and at length was laid in a reclining position upon the side of the cliff by her two attendants. A few rough stones formed

a pillow for her head; and two little girls who were of the party made with their wooden spades a resting-place for her feet. The children then went a little apart to play, and the two women ascended the cliff, and were soon out of sight. At a very short distance from the sick girl, I sat. The first glance at her wasted and twisted figure, and thin, pale face, convinced me that an affection of the spine was, at least, one cause of her suffering; and by the mode in which I saw her conveyed to the cliff, and there laid down, I judged that God had, in a great measure, taken from her the use of her limbs.

"Now, dear children, what sort of a countenance do you think this poor young lady had? I have already said that it was sickly and pale; but was it like the very many sick faces which we see around us, expressive of weariness, discontent, and bitterness? No: pale and thin it was, and there was an expression of suffering on the fair white brow, and about the corners of the mouth; but the clear eyes looked out upon the vast ocean with an expression of as much thankful enjoyment as was ever felt by the young joyous heart of a happy girl, in the pride of her youth and strength. No discontent or repining was a moment visible in that pale face; not a complaint or impatient murmur escaped her lips. As they laid her down, the movement, gentle as it was, evidently caused great pain. I saw her lips for a moment tightly compressed, and a quick gesture of suffering pervade her whole frame. Then she smiled, and repeatedly said, 'Thank you;' and when she was left alone, stirred not hand or foot for some moments. I wished to speak to her; to address to her some

question or remark, which I could follow up by an expression of sympathy. But deeply as I felt for her, I feared so much that she should think me actuated merely by a feeling of impertinent curiosity, that I refrained from doing so, though I seated myself at a very short distance from her. It was not, however, long, before I had an opportunity of rendering her a slight service. The children were motioned by her to bring some more stones to place under her head. With the thoughtlessness of childhood, they brought some which were still wet from the recent tide. I procured others, and requested leave to place them under her head. I did so; and was then obliged to leave her, and return to my own lodgings. Very shortly I went back to the same spot: but the sick girl was gone, and I never saw her again.

"I want you, dear children, to think of her patience and fortitude whenever you are inclined to be cross, or impatient of any trifling indisposition. A great measure of health and strength has been granted to each of you, besides countless other blessings. You may never be afflicted as was this young girl, though even of this you cannot be certain. Many persons, who are healthy in childhood, suffer in after life. But there are slight ailments which are the common lot of all; and how often have I seen a headache, a feeling of fatigue, or a trifling cold, call forth selfish and reiterated complaints from persons who should have been too thankful for their many rich blessings, to complain of such insignificant inconveniences. How often do such persons selfishly engross, or endeavour to engross, the whole attention of those around them; and thus render uncom-

fortable, not themselves alone, but all with whom they come into contact. Oh! could those who thus impatiently bear a slight indisposition, know from experience the trouble and suffering which are the accompaniments of a real illness, they would, I think, for very shame, if not from a higher motive, act otherwise."

The twins were silent for some moments after their mother had ceased to speak; then Lily said,

"Mamma, we will not do so; if we are ever ill, we will be patient and gentle, and not make you sorry, by being selfish and cross; will we, Mary?"

"No," said Mary, very earnestly; "we will try to be always thankful to God for all his kindness to us, and that will keep us from being impatient and troublesome. But, Mamma, did the young lady look as if she would never become strong again?"

"I cannot say, my love: as I tell you, I scarcely spoke to her; so I could not judge of her state of health, except from what I had an opportunity of seeing then. I should like much to see that contented, peaceful face again; but it is not likely that in this world I ever shall."

"She is perhaps dead now, Mamma," said Mary, in a low tone.

"Yes, my dear," said Mrs. Fortescue, as she rose from her seat, "it is not at all improbable; and if so, I trust that she has entered into that rest which remaineth for the people of God. Now, dear children, you have sat here long enough. We will go and walk upon the shore; it is nearly low water, and I dare say we shall find some beautiful pieces of sea-weed, and perhaps some shells."

"We will make sand castles," said Lily. "But listen, Mary, there is music!" she continued,

looking up towards the terrace. "Oh! Mamma, how pretty! May we not go nearer?"

"Yes, surely you may, my dear," said her mother, "and I will go with you." And ascending the flight of wooden stairs opposite to the Beach Hotel, the children and their mother approached near to a crowd of people, in the midst of which stood an old man with white hair, playing upon an organ.

"Poor old man!" exclaimed Mary; "how tired he must be when night comes, after he has turned that handle all day! I should like to give him something, Mamma. See! the people hardly look at him; but they must know he is playing. Lily, shall you and I give him something?"

Lily hesitated for a moment. "Oh! I quite forgot, Lily!" said Mary quickly. "Of course you cannot; but I can. Mamma, may I run home for my purse? I know the way."

"We will go with you, Mary," said Mrs. Fortescue; "I should not like you to go anywhere alone."

They went; and were glad to find on their return to the terrace, that the old man was still in the same place. With Lily close beside her, Mary presented her little gift. The sum was a trifling one; yet it was more than the organ-player was accustomed to receive, especially from the hands of children. The old man looked at the childish figures before him, and was touched. Many children had given him alms; but there was a gentleness and purity in the little faces before him which he had seldom seen. Lower he bowed to Mrs. Fortescue than was his wont; and then respectfully asked the twins what tune he should play.

"'Home, sweet Home,' please," they replied, after a brief whisper; "you were playing it when we came up the steps."

The old man complied; and this time he was not without auditors. Four or five persons of both sexes had gathered round him, gazing with much curiosity at the animated looks with which the little Fortescues were listening to the music. Their mother, however, soon led them away; and the old man's countenance fell as she did so.

"What bonnie bairns!" said a Scotchman to his wife, when they were out of hearing.

"Aye," said another, "you may go from one end of Blackpool to another, before you come across any like them. They have been well brought up; that's pretty plain. The mother is one of a thousand, or I'm mistaken."

"Mamma," said Mary that evening, "I am going to write to Willie, and so is Lily. You know it is a good while since he wrote to us."

"It is just a week," said Mrs. Fortescue, smiling, "but write by all means, my love, if you wish it; and perhaps I also will enclose a note."

The twins wrote a nice little note; and as they agreed not to see each other's epistle, they did not say quite the same things.

Mary's note was as follows:—

"Dear Willie,—Mamma says she shall, perhaps, put a note in my cover. Your letter was very nice; and thank you for it. You know we are here at Blackpool; we are very happy, and we have scarcely any lessons to learn, and we are out on the shore nearly all day. I wish you were with us. But you would not find many shells here; very few indeed; so, dear Willie, I fear I cannot collect any for you, as I said I would. There is plenty of sea-weed, and some of very beautiful kinds; and I will take some home with me for you.

Lily is so brave in the sea! but I have never been in at all yet; which will make you laugh, Willie. But I do mean to bathe next time, if I possibly can. I do not know what makes me so much afraid. I see little girls, less than I am, not a bit frightened, and splashing about, like Lily. Mamma has been in the sea. It is very strong and mighty; but God made it, and keeps it from hurting us by its strength; so it is very silly of me to be afraid of it. Nurse sends her love; and with mine, believe me, dear Willie,

"Your affectionate friend,

"MARY FORTESCUE."

Lily's note was much to the same general effect; but bore the stamp of the somewhat more lively character of the writer.

"DEAR WILLIE,—I was glad to receive your note: very glad. Blackpool is a very nice place; and we are all so happy. Mamma is becoming quite rosy; and Mary is always hungry. Your rabbit, I mean the one you like so much, was very plump when we left home. Wilson said he would take great care of them all. I can almost swim: at least, I think so; but mamma says, not quite. I wish you were here, Willie. How your little ship would sail upon this great sea! There are fine waves now; but you cannot think how still the sea was when we came the first day. There were six ships in sight yesterday: I saw them through a telescope. This afternoon, an old man played 'Home, sweet Home,' upon an organ; and though we are so happy here, we like to think about home. We have been here a week and a day; and we are to stay six weeks, which we are very happy to think of. Good bye, Willie. Christmas will soon be here; and then we shall have fine games again. Fancy the skating and snow-balling that you will have. We will make a snow man this time; and you must save an old hat of your papa's to put on his head. Nurse sends her love, and with mine,

"Believe me, dear Willie,

"Your affectionate friend,

"LILY FORTESCUE."

"Write soon."

And now, for the satisfaction of my young readers, I gladly bear testimony to the sincerity of little Mary's resolution to overcome her dread of sea-bathing; and can further record, that the effort which she made on the next Friday morning was no slight one, for a child of a temperament so nervous and timid. Once made, however, the bathing-times afterwards were comparatively agreeable; and though Mary never felt Lily's keen enjoyment of a dip in the sea, she could yet take pleasure in it to a certain degree; and her spirit of willing, cheerful obedience filled with sweet gladness the heart of her mother.

Six weeks rolled swiftly by; and again Mrs. Fortescue stood by her own hearth, with the twins beside her; Mary once more in full health and vigour, and in great delight at being again at home.

Very sweetly were the children's voices, on this, the first evening of their return, mingled in their favourite song of "Home, sweet Home;" and with a grateful heart their mother returned thanks to her heavenly Father for his loving providence and goodness towards her, and the children whom He had given her. God had indeed made her cup to run over; and it was her happy experience to know that his mercy is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him; and his righteousness upon children's children.

THE END.

R. CLAY, PRINTER, BREAD STREET HILL.

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